



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Office of the Head of Primary Care
South East Community Healthcare
HSE Offices, Lacken
Dublin Road
Kilkenny

Telephone +353 56 7784100

15th October 2020

Ms. Verona Murphy TD
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 29212/20

To ask the Minister for Health the number of HSE therapists within CHO5 that have been redeployed as COVID-19 testers and contact tracers; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 29213/20

To ask the Minister for Health when he expects therapists within CHO5 that have been redeployed to work as COVID-19 testers and tracers, particularly those in speech and language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy to return to their expert disciplines; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Murphy,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which were submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

I have examined the matter and the following response outlines the current position.

In preparing for and responding to COVID-19 and to fully align with Public Health guidance as recommended via the NPHET, the HSE and its partner service providers put in place a range of measures. Effective redeployment of health service employees was a core element of the response in the HSE to COVID-19. Hospital groups and Community Health Organisations (CHOs) temporarily redeployed staff to support their business continuity plans, emerging services developing in direct response to COVID-19 and in response to the health and availability of staff in their own organisations. Many grades and categories of staff including therapists were redeployed to other services such as testing, contact tracing, service support and other areas.

Having said that, some services continued with therapists including speech and language therapists working with service users and their families remotely and using technology in new and effective ways.

The HSE has recently commenced a recruitment campaign for staff to support community testing facilities for COVID-19. Recruitment for these roles will support the return of staff who have been temporarily seconded to swabbing centres and contact tracing centres to return to their substantive roles. In the South East, the first recruited 9 Swabbing Staff commenced on 15th October 2020 and

when they are trained /upskilled, it will facilitate the returned of staff members to their substantive posts.

As an interim measure the HSE has recruited staff via agency and are using also clinical staff when they are not rostered for their substantive posts. In addition the HSE is also seeking to return staff not fully returned to their substantive posts on a partial basis in order to support service recovery.

Across the South East, many therapists are now returning to their substantive roles with some continuing to partially work (on a rotational basis) on COVID-19 work or supporting the swabbing/testing at weekends.

All Primary Care Occupational Therapy Services (including Paediatrics) have resumed and are being provided in line with public health guidelines and COVID-19 risk assessments. In Speech & Language Therapy priority adult supports continued throughout COVID-19 but other services have now resumed in line with public health guidance. Primary Care Physiotherapy continue to accept referrals for patients, with referrals seen based on clinical need priority. Physiotherapy offers a service using a blended approach of telephone consults, video consultations, face to face appointments and home visits.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Jeanne Hendrick
A/Head of Service-Primary Care
South East Community Healthcare