



10th November 2020

Deputy Gary Gannon,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 29260/20 – “To ask the Minister for Health if public health nurses are currently active; if they have been redeployed by Covid-19 contact and tracing or if they are back within communities; and if not, if there is a date when they can be expected to return.”

- Gary Gannon

Dear Deputy Gannon,

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

The spread of COVID-19 is posing significant challenges for many service areas. In January to August 2020, a total of 242,453 public health nursing patients were seen.

The HSE Covid-19 Community Testing Service is committed to the timely provision of safe, accessible, quality swabbing services within the community setting. In order to respond to the pandemic it was necessary to utilise existing staff, including Public Health Nurses, through redeployment.

In September 2020 a total of **866** staff from CHOs were redeployed to Covid Testing including 46 Public Health Nurses.

A recruitment campaign for Community Swabbers closed on Monday 21st September and interviews have commenced and a first group of successful candidates offered roles, 270 of which will have commenced work in community swabbing this week. Of necessity there will be a period of handover to ensure new staff are operating with strong clinical governance, additionally many of these staff have been redeployed for a period and in many cases have not taken annual leave and it is likely that they need a period of leave / rest prior to re-commencing in their substantive posts.

The key document in terms of returning staff to their substantive posts is titled “Service Continuity in a Covid Environment. A Strategic Framework for Delivery”.

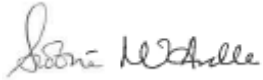
This framework document was prepared in June 2020 and provides the framework for staff to return to their substantive posts from Covid related work.

A link to the document is provided below:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/service-continuity-in-a-covid-environment-a-strategic-framework-for-delivery1.pdf>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Siobhán McArdle,
Head of Operations Primary Care,
Community Operations