



29th September 2020

Deputy Cian O'Callaghan,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 23839/20 - To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to concerns regarding the deployment of speech and language therapists and other allied health professionals by the HSE for Covid-19 testing; the steps being taken to provide a plan for staffing test centres that does not rely on redeployment of essential health professionals; when such a plan will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Cian O'Callaghan

Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

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.

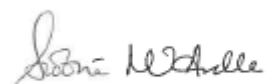
The HSE Covid-19 Community Testing Service is committed to the timely provision of safe, accessible, quality swabbing services within the community setting. In order to respond to the pandemic it was necessary utilise existing staff through redeployment.

The Recruitment campaign for Community Swabbers closed on Monday 21/09/2020 with just under 3,500 applications received and interviews commencing immediately. It is anticipated that these new staff will be available to commence swabbing in October 2020 which will allow many Allied Health Professional staff to return to their posts.

The HSE is working to ensure timely access to children and adults requiring therapy services, and to reduce long waiting times for these important services. The spread of COVID-19 is posing significant challenges for many service areas, including all Therapy Services. In light of these unprecedented challenges together with the Government's guidance on social distancing and on 'Cocooning' for those aged over 70, the HSE has had to reassess its operation of Community Therapy Services nationally, to ensure that the assessed needs of those clients with the highest priority are met.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Siobhán McArdle,
Head of Operations Primary Care,
Community Operations