

30th September 2020

Deputy Holly Cairns
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 24663/20

Question: “To ask the Minister for Health his views on the impact of the redeployment of HSE therapists to work as Covid-19 testers and contact tracers on the services provided to persons with disabilities”.

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct 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 to utilise existing staff through redeployment.

The HSE is working to ensure timely access for children and adults who require 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.

The recruitment campaign for Community swabbers closed on Monday 21st September and interviews have commenced and a first group offered roles. 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.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead for Testing and Tracing