



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oifig Niamh O'Beirne, ,Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Tástála agus Rianaithe  
Ospidéal an Dr. Steevens, Baile Átha Cliath 8, D08 W2A8

Office of Niamh O' Beirne, National Lead for Testing & Tracing  
Dr Steevens' Hospital, Steevens' Lane, Dublin D08 W2A8

12<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Deputy Claire Kerrane  
Dáil Éireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 26145/20

**Question: “To ask the Minister for Health if therapists employed by the HSE have been redeployed to Covid-19 testing centres; if so, the number; if further redeployment of therapists is continuing; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.**

Dear Deputy Kerrane,

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.

In September 2020 a total of **866** staff from CHOs were redeployed to Covid Testing with the breakdown as follows:

- 80% of redeployments (690) are for 3 staff categories (Medical and Dental; Nursing; Health and Social Care Professionals- the latter group are the therapy grades)
- A total of 430 Health and Social Care Professionals are deployed to testing (50% of deployments to testing)
- A total of 228 nursing staff are deployed to testing (26% of deployments to testing)
- A total of 32 Medical and Dental Staff are deployed to testing (4% of deployments to testing)

The recruitment campaign for Community swabbers closed on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September and interviews have commenced and a first group of successful candidates 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*

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**Niamh O'Beirne**  
National Lead for Testing and Tracing