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13 October 2020

**Deputy Marian Harkin
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 26987/20 - To ask the Minister for Health the plans in place to deal with the under-resourcing of the HSE community dental service compounded by the redeployment of dentists from the service to undertake testing and contact tracing as part of the HSE Covid-19 public health response; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - Marian Harkin

Dear Deputy Harkin,

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 HSE has recently commenced a recruitment campaign for staff to support community testing facilities and contract tracing for COVID-19. The recruitment of Community Swabbing staff will support the return of dentists and other clinical staff to their substantive roles.

The HSE is working to ensure timely access to children and adults requiring dental 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 dental services. Each dental service has identified priority groups within its catchment area.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but if you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Green', written over a horizontal line.

**Joseph Green
AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations**