



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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22nd April 2021

Deputy Neale Richmond
TD
Dail Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ18199/21: To ask the Minister for Health his views on delays in childcare staff being contacted by public health regarding close contact notifications and the risk of the delays resulting in an increased spread in covid-19 and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Richmond,

The above PQ has been forwarded to my Department for direct response to you on same.

When the HSE is notified of a confirmed case of Covid-19, who attended an educational (school or childcare) facility within their infectious time period, they are referred to the Departments of Public Health. The Schools teams within these departments contact the case and the educational facility and undertake a Public Health Risk Assessment, identify close contacts and they are then excluded, asked to restrict their movements and are referred for Covid-19 testing. This process usually happens on the same day the school is referred to the Departments of Public Health, but if it is referred later in the afternoon, it may be the following morning before a Public Health Risk Assessment is able to be undertaken. It is re-enforced to all providers and principals that staff or students with symptoms of Covid-19 should not attend any educational facility. If someone with symptoms attends a facility, they should be isolated and return home as soon as possible (as per relevant guidance issued to facilities). Therefore at the time the case is identified, they are no longer within the educational facility and no longer able to spread Covid-19 to others within the facility. Should they have already infected someone else within the setting, the incubation period for Covid-19 is 2 weeks (average 4-7 days) and this therefore allows Public Health the time to undertake its assessment and clinical work. If someone is determined not have been within the educational facility during their infectious time period, then the HSE identifies the community close contacts as normal.

I trust this clarification will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Kelleher', with a horizontal line underneath.

DR. KEVIN KELLEHER, FFPHM, FFPHMI
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