



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

05th March 2021

Deputy Colm Burke
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2.

Rannan na nOspideil Ghearmhíochaine
Aonad 4A – Áras Dargan
An Ceantar Theas
An Bothar Mileata
Cill Mhaighneann
BÁC 8

Acute Operations
Health Service Executive
Unit 4A - The Dargan Building
Heuston South Quarter
Military Road
Kilmainham
Dublin 8.

PQ 8807/21* To ask the Minister for Health the routine non-Covid-19 medical care that has been suspended due to the pandemic; the length of time they have been suspended since 2020 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Colm Burke

Dear Deputy Burke,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Response

Since the onset of COVID-19 there has been significant reduction in all scheduled care activity across Acute Services including outpatient clinics, this is in line with the National Action Plan on COVID-19 (page 20).

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/47b727-government-publishes-national-action-plan-on-covid-19/>

Arising from the NPHET decision in early May regarding resumption of services and aligned with the roadmap for reopening society and business, Phase 1 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ad5dd0-easing-the-covid-19-restrictions-on-may-18-phase-1/#health-and-social-care>, interim guidance was developed in the context of all scheduled services for the resumption of activity including outpatients. This guidance has been approved by the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) and has been issued to all hospital groups/hospitals to support the resumption of scheduled care.

The guidance outlines the measures that need to be undertaken to ensure safety for both patients and staff and varies depending on the type of appointment or treatment the patient is receiving.

These measures were implemented as services resumed in 2020 and they have affected patient pathways in a number of ways. In the latter part of 2020, as services adapted to new workflows and processes associated with providing care within a COVID environment, the number of patients treated began to increase. However, the number of patients being treated in the scheduled care pathway in the early part of 2021 has been affected by the latest surge in COVID-19 and the requirement to prioritise access for time – urgent care.

The HSE does not routinely collect data on cancellations from Hospitals. We have also engaged with the NTPF in this regard and they have advised that, following a review of data provided from Hospitals, the full information to respond to the questions asked is not available. For example, non-waiting list cancellations and OPD return cancellations are not collected. It has also been made clear from engagement with Hospital's that in line with clinical guidance and aligned with other COVID related pressures, they took steps to reduce the number of booked appointments rather than cancel them. I have included outpatient data and inpatient and day case activity for years 2018 – 2020 inclusive for comparative purposes.

The Deputy may be aware that significant funding has been identified in the National Service Plan (NSP) 2021 to support access to care. The HSE is working with Hospital Groups and the NTPF to ensure that available additional funding in 2021 is targeted at access to care for patients where care delivery has been affected by the Pandemic.

I trust that this answers your questions.

Yours sincerely,

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

Robert Kidd
Assistant National Director
Acute Operations