



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Stiúirthóra Náisiúnta um Phleanáil agus Chlaochlú Straitéiseach  
Seomra 2.49, Ospidéal Dr Steevens', Lána Steevens', BAC D08 W2A8  
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Room 2.49, Dr Steevens' Hospital, Steevens' Lane, Dublin D08 W2A8  
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8<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Deputy Gary Gannon  
Dail Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**RE: PQ 1630/21**

Dear Deputy Gannon,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above referenced Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health. The question concerned was referred by colleagues in Parliamentary Affairs to Strategic Planning and Transformation in the HSE for review and direct response, as we are managing the HSE's Covid-19 Contact Management Programme (CMP).

Please accept my apologies for the delay in issuing this response to you.

**Parliamentary Question: To ask the Minister for Health if any contact tracers are currently working in open plan office; if so, his views on whether this is safe and best practice given the current number of Covid-19 cases and if he will make a statement on the matter – Deputy Gary Gannon**

**Response:** I can advise that in certain circumstances, Contact Tracing Staff are working in open-plan offices, within Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs).

All CTCs have arrangements in place to ensure that robust pre-return to workplace procedures are being implemented and that all procedures comply with the Government's *Work Safely Protocol*. These procedures are clearly communicated to employees within the CTCs. The protocol, which is a revision of the previous Return to Work Safely Protocol, was published on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and incorporates current public health advice. It outlines the measures needed to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) issued revised [Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19](#) concerning working arrangements and temporary assignments across the Public Service dated the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021. In line with this, the HSE has issued [HR circular 005/2021](#). This circular outlines the guidelines to ensure that there are robust procedures in place to maintain safe practices for people who are working in open-plan offices. The HSE's Contact Management Programme (CMP), as with other areas of the HSE, is fully cognisant of the guidance in this circular and other associated guidelines referred to above, in terms of the safe management of all workplaces within its area of responsibility that require people to be on site at this time.



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The safety, health and welfare of staff is of critical importance. The CMP actively reviews and identifies measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and continues to support the communication of health advice re COVID-19 in all workplaces in its remit including CTCs. Appropriate social/physical distancing, frequent handwashing/sanitising, cough/sneezing etiquette and wearing of masks where physical distancing is not possible in the workplace, continue to be the cornerstones of public health advice in this regard and these messages are promoted continuously within the CTCs, with infrastructure in place to facilitate the adherence to this guidance.

I trust this response deals with your query however; if you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Yours sincerely,

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Sarah Ryan  
Business Manager  
Office of the National Director, Strategic Planning and Transformation and Head of CMP



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