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Deputy David Cullinane  
Dail Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2  
9<sup>th</sup> February 2021

**PQ ref: 4276/21**

**Question:** To ask the Minister for Health if additional supports have been made available for those living with HIV during the Covid-19 pandemic; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

Thank you for your question to the Minister for Health, which was forwarded to my office to respond to you directly.

Community support services for people living with HIV have continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Community partner organisations are funded by the HSE to provide these services. These services have been adapted to minimise Covid related risk to clients and to respond to the individual needs of clients during the pandemic.

Information on Covid-19 for people living with HIV was developed and communicated via campaigns, [seminars](#), newsletters, social media or partner websites. See [HIV Ireland](#) and [Sexual Health Centre Cork](#).

Counselling and one-to-one support services continued during Covid-19, mainly moving to virtual or telephone meetings, with some face-to-face meetings where possible and by client preference. Staff from the support services made contact with clients to determine any additional needs during Covid, and provided support or referral as required.

Community partners have continued to support new HIV clients and collaborate with clinical HIV services to ensure access to treatment or to other community services, such as addiction and migrant services, where relevant.

Migrant health services, including the National Reception Centre Baleskin, continued to identify people living with HIV during the pandemic and contacted clients by phone to provide information on sexual health, mental health and the available HIV support organisations, and referral to Social Work or psychological services as required. Services

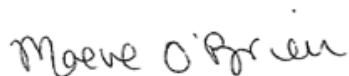
have ensured timely referral to HIV clinical services for HIV treatment or specialist review and made arrangements to collect medications for some clients during the pandemic.

All HIV clinical care services have continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Adaptations have been made to service delivery, balancing risks to minimise COVID related risk to patients whilst maintaining continuity of HIV care.

For those already engaged in care, maintenance of antiretroviral therapy for those living with HIV has been a priority since the beginning of the pandemic. Depending on individual clinical need, consultations have been conducted virtually or in person. Arrangements have been made for delivery and collection of medications for those unable to travel, including for many who are overseas. Services have worked closely with the prisons, drug treatment services and Inclusion Health services to ensure continuity of care and treatment.

Services continue to see those transferring HIV care or newly diagnosed with HIV infection.

Yours Sincerely



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**Maeve O'Brien**

Interim Programme Lead

Sexual Health & Crisis Pregnancy Programme