



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig um Cheannasaí Seirbhíse do Chúram Príomhúil
Cúram Sláinte Phobail FSS an Mheán Iarthair
Ascaill Bhaile Choimin,
Páirc Gnó an Ráithín, Ráithín
Luimneach
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25th March, 2021

Deputy Violet-Anne Wynne
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 12546/21 - Resumption of Therapy Services in Co. Clare

Dear Deputy Wynne,

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question in relation to the above: *"To ask the Minister for Health if there is a roadmap to resume Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy Services in County Clare; when the relevant Therapists who normally carry out this service who have been redeployed to carry out contact tracing or other duties will return to their posts; and if he will make a statement on the matter"*.

I can advise that since March 2020, all Primary Care Services in Co. Clare including Speech & Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy for children and adults have continued to offer a level of service. Contingency plans for each service were drawn up in line with Public Health Guidelines to ensure the safety of service users and staff during the Covid 19 Pandemic while maintaining service provision for service users requiring a Priority 1 service. Each service has ensured that high priority cases were dealt with in a safe and effective manner during Level 5 restrictions. All services are delivered in line with the National Guidelines around Infection Prevention and Control measures to ensure the safety of service users and staff.

When Covid 19 infection levels were lower, services were in a position to offer more face to face appointments to service users. As the infection levels rose and as a result of Government restrictions and Public Health Guidelines, services such as Speech & Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy moved some elements of their service provision online to telehealth platforms to ensure continuity of services in new and innovative ways.

The redeployment of Primary Care staff including Speech & Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists was necessary to support the Covid Response Plan. These staff members played a key role in the setting up, developing and provision of Covid 19 services. Services such as Community Testing, Serial Testing, Outbreak Management, Contact Tracing, Community Assessment Hubs and Isolation Facilities were staffed by Primary Care staff. Most recently, Primary Care staff have played a pivotal role in the implementation of the vaccination programme. As we reach the end of the third wave, the vast majority of redeployed staff have returned to their substantive posts and the focus now is on the restoration of services to pre-Covid 19 levels and planning on how to reduce the waiting lists generated as a result of Covid 19.

The restoration of services is dependent on the requirement of the HSE to respond to any surge in Covid 19 in which case, staff redeployment to Covid related services is a priority.

All services must be delivered in line with national Infection, Prevention and Control Guidelines and this means that some elements of service provision has moved to online platforms.

I trust this addresses the issues raised in your representation.

Yours sincerely,


p.p. **Margaret Costello**
Head of Service Primary Care