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7th December 2021

Deputy Peadar Tóibín, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to this Department for response.

PQ 57532/21: To ask the Minister for Health if the HSE has a reserve of healthcare staff or professionals to assist with nursing homes in instances of staff shortages or staffing emergencies arising from Covid-19; if so, if he will provide detail on such reserves; and if he will outline the number of reserve staff currently available in each county.

In line with direction given by the National Public Health Emergency Team and current Public Health guidance, the HSE continue to provide a range of enhanced Public Health and mitigation measures across all facilities, regardless of whether operated by public, private and voluntary providers. The HSEs COVID-19 Response Teams actively support prevention, preparedness and management of outbreaks, including through ensuring facilities have access to Public Health and Infection and Prevention Control guidance and support, provision of Personal Protective Equipment, temporary staff accommodation, and access to training, educational resources and other relevant supports.

As identified by COVID-19 Nursing Home Expert Panel, one of the key learnings from the earlier stages of the pandemic, was the importance of ensuring all providers have robust staff contingency plans in place, which can be rapidly activated when required. While the HSE does not have a reserve of healthcare staff or professionals specifically assigned to assist private and voluntary Nursing Homes in instances of staff shortages arising from COVID-19, the HSE will continue to provide staffing supports in exceptional circumstances, where available.

I hope this clarifies the position.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra Tuohy".

Sandra Tuohy,
Assistant National Director - Community Operations,
Services for Older People.