



5<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Deputy Catherine Murphy,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ 45111/21 - To ask the Minister for Health the number of in-person newborn and infant developmental checks carried out by public health nurses by CHO region in 2020 and to date in 2021; the number of checks carried out by phone; the number of checks not conducted; and the backlog of same.**

**- Catherine Murphy**

Dear Deputy Murphy,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 45111/21), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

I refer to your above question and wish to advise the information sought is not routinely collected currently. However, the following data is available which I hope will be of assistance to you regarding the number of visits made by Public Health Nursing staff. In the full year 2020, over 28,000 children reaching 10 months old in the period had their child development health screening on time or before reaching 12 months of age. The age range in the reported metric has changed from 2021 and in January to July 2021, a total of 14,067 children reaching 12 months within the reporting period have had their child health and developmental assessment on time or before reaching 12 months of age.

Since March 2020, many Public Health Nursing (PHN) staff have been redeployed to support COVID-19 related clinical activities up to and including leading on the establishment of COVID-19 central vaccination clinics. This redeployment of staff has had a significant impact on the capacity of the PHN service to deliver the core child health screening and surveillance programme.

However, due to the recruitment of vaccinators and more staff to test and trace, our public health nursing staff are returning to their core duties and child development checks will be a priority as a result. Building upon the experience from earlier waves of the pandemic, Community Services has developed a prioritisation framework to support local decisions to be made on service prioritisation. This approach will ensure that services will be focused on identifying and supporting patients who have the greatest need and enabling staff to be deployed where necessary to support these patients. It is the intention of Community Services that full services would return as soon as is safe and practicable.

Child development checks remain a priority and any parents with a concern should contact their GP or local Public Health Nursing service. All new parents should receive a copy of the My Child: 0 to 2 years book from their PHN, which includes information on child safety, vaccinations and overall health and wellbeing. A postnatal check-up is

carried out at 6 weeks by the GP or obstetrician. The postnatal check and the baby's 6 week check can be done by the GP during the same appointment. It should be noted that new mothers are still being visited within 72 of discharge from maternity services.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seán McArt'.

**Seán McArt**

General Manager Primary Care  
National Community Operations