



Príomhoifigeach Cliniciúil
Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Cliniciúil

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BY EMAIL ONLY

Deputy Róisín Shortall

Dáil Éireann

Leinster House

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

10th February 2022

PQ 4128/22 Deputy Róisín Shortall- To ask the Minister for Health if, in the context of the latest easing of Covid-19 restrictions, directives or guidance will be issued by his Department to hospitals on the easing of visitor restrictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Shortall,

Thank you for your representation.

The HSE understand the seeing friends and family is a very important support for patients in hospital. Equally the HSE understands that restrictions have caused and are causing distress to patients and their families and friends and plans to get back to the kind of access for visitors and support partners that was in place before the pandemic as soon as possible. Although many people hoped that the lifting of most restrictions for wider society on 22nd January meant that hospital visiting would immediately go back to the way it was before the pandemic clinical advice on Infection Prevention and Control from HSE-AMRIC is that we need to move more cautiously in the hospital setting. Hospitals are very different from many other places where people come together for work or to meet each other. Some of the most vulnerable people in our society are in hospital. There are still a high number of cases of infection in the community. Although infection is causing much less harm to people in the community than it did unfortunately that does not mean it will do little harm to patients in hospital. Patients in hospital are already very sick and in many cases have disease or are on treatment that means their immune system is not working very well. The HSE is still seeing cases of people who have caught infection in hospital.

However because of the importance of seeing friends and family, HSE AMRIC guidance recommended controlled access (visiting and access for nominated support partners) to acute hospitals that takes account of the needs of individual patients. The current guidance has been reviewed and an update is due for publication during week of 7th – 10th February with an expected implementation date of 14th February. This new guidance will recommend a move towards greater access for visitors and partners and the HSE will work with hospitals to implement the guidance across the acute hospital system.



However, HSE-AMRIC guidance is that it is too early to return fully to the level of access that was there before the pandemic given the ongoing risk.

This will be kept under review with progress to return to normal as soon as it is safe to do so.

I hope this provides you with assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Sharon Hayden', is written over a thin horizontal line.

Sharon Hayden
General Manager
Office of the CCO