



Oifig Ceannasaí Oibríochtaí,
Oibríochtaí Pobail, Cúram Príomhúil

Seomra 243, Ospidéal Dr Steevens,
Lána Steevens, Baile Átha Cliath 8.
D08 W2A8.

Office of the Head of Operations,
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20th July 2022

Deputy Neasa Hourigan,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 36964/22 – To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a number of CHOs in which child developmental checks are not currently taking place; his plans to ensure their full resumption; the timeline for same; his plans to ensure that those who originally missed out on developmental checks have been caught up with; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Neasa Hourigan

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 36964/22) which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Public Health Nurses are healthcare professionals who provide a range of nursing services in the community including child development assessments in line with the National Healthy Childhood Programme. The Public Health Nursing service is one of a number of multidisciplinary health services provided through Primary Care within the community setting.

In relation to child development assessments the core developmental checks are provided at the following intervals:

- At birth (within 72 hours of discharge from hospital)
- 3 months
- 9-11 months
- 21-24 months
- 46-48 months

In relation to service capacity, since March 2020, many Public Health Nursing staff have been redeployed to support COVID-19 related clinical activities including providing clinical leadership and direct support in the establishment of COVID-19 vaccination clinics. This redeployment of staff has had a significant impact on the capacity of the Public Health Nursing service to deliver the core child health screening and surveillance programme. The redeployment of staff varied in each Community Health Organisation depending on the needs of the population and local service capacity.

Due to the recruitment of vaccinators and progress with the overall COVID 19 vaccination programme, our public health nursing staff have been returning to their core duties which enables the resumption of a full service. 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 has ensured that services are focused on identifying and supporting patients who have the



greatest need and enabling staff to be deployed where necessary to support these patients. Child development checks remain a priority and any parents with a concern should contact their GP or local Public Health Nursing service

From a national perspective the HSE is actively seeking to source public health nurses to address current shortages. It should be noted that recruitment of healthcare staff, including nursing, remains very competitive with shortages in qualified staff experienced internationally. The HSE will continue to use transfer panels and direct recruitment for Public Health Nurses across the area.

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