



Oifig Ceannasaí Oibríochtaí,
Oibríochtaí Pobail, Cúram Príomhúil

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16th June 2022

Deputy Joe O'Brien,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 30864/22 – To ask the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to increasing the availability of long-Covid clinics to ensure access to care for all long-Covid patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Joe O'Brien

Dear Deputy O'Brien,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 30864/22) which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE recognises the need to provide follow up support and care for patients experiencing prolonged signs and symptoms of Covid-19. In response to this it has developed an Interim Model Of Care (MoC) for Long Covid which was finalised in September 2021. The aim of the MoC is to provide a national approach to provision of services and supports for patients experiencing prolonged symptoms of Covid-19. It sets out a framework for the provision of these services and supports spanning General Practice, Community Services, Acute Hospitals and Mental Health Services. The resultant Interim MoC recommended the development of eight Post-Acute Clinics and six Long Covid clinics.

The aim of Post-Acute Covid clinics is to ensure that patients who have recovered from the acute phase of Covid-19 are followed up in a timely and appropriate fashion taking into account factors such as disease severity, likelihood of long term respiratory symptoms and functional disability. Post-Acute Clinics will be led by respiratory consultants and will provide assessment and ongoing care for patients within twelve weeks of infection.

The following eight hospital sites have been nominated as Post-Acute Covid clinics:

- Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown
- Mater University Hospital
- Tallaght University Hospital
- St. James University Hospital
- Cork University Hospital
- University Hospital Galway
- University Hospital Limerick
- Letterkenny University Hospital



Long Covid Clinics are a specialist service for patients with signs and symptoms that develop during or after an infection consistent with Covid-19, continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis. Long Covid clinics will be led by infectious disease consultants.

The following six hospital sites have been nominated as Long Covid clinics:

- St. James University Hospital
- Cork University Hospital
- University Hospital Galway
- University Hospital Limerick
- Beaumont University Hospital
- St. Vincent's University Hospital

Establishment of Post-Acute and Long Covid Clinics will be an initial priority for implementation of the MoC. Recruitment of the personnel associated within each of the clinics has commenced. This includes consultants in the area of infectious diseases, respiratory medicine, neurology and additional multi-disciplinary staff to support the work of these clinics.

In some incidences the designated hospital sites are providing Long Covid and Post-Acute clinics on an interim basis while awaiting recruitment of full staffing as per the MoC. They have been established in response to local need and are leveraging existing resources and capacity. The HSE is now working with these sites to expand their resources to ensure they can meet the requirements of the MoC and what is required within a local context. It is also working with sites that do not already have access to designated clinics so that these can become operational.

As this is an interim Model, the approach to implementation will be agile and flexible, as there may be a need to change and adapt services based on learnings from clinics, new and emerging evidence and current and future demand for service. As clinics become fully operational, the HSE will be collating metrics such as waiting lists, numbers of patients treated and numbers of clinics operating. This information will be key to informing any required expansion of clinics and/or the development of additional clinics at other hospital sites.

At present, patients with persistent symptoms following Covid-19 infection may be followed up by their GP or in hospital settings as clinically appropriate. People in the community who are concerned about persistent symptoms following Covid-19 should contact their GP in the first instance, who will be able to assess and signpost them towards the service most appropriate to their needs, including on-ward referral to a Post-Acute or Long Covid clinic if appropriate.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TJ Dunford', written over a horizontal line.

TJ Dunford

Head of Operations - Primary Care



Community Operations