



7th July 2022

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: michael.healy-rae@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 32828/22

Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he will address a matter in relation to the redeployment of Community Swabbers (“Minister for the hundreds of people employed as Community Swabbers who are now about to lose their jobs and yet we have so many hospitals under staffed, why can’t they be redeployed”).

Dear Deputy Healy-Rae,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

Due to the high levels of protection against COVID-19 in the population resulting from vaccination and natural infection, the level of harm caused by COVID-19 has significantly reduced. As the disease moves from pandemic to endemic status there is a gradual transition from widespread testing and contact tracing for active cases towards a more targeted individual testing model similar to other respiratory illnesses, based on Public Health guidance. During this transition period a much smaller workforce is required as the volume of testing is significantly reduced from the peak earlier this year.

Staff members in Community Testing were asked to complete a survey to evaluate potential suitability and interest for roles within the HSE beyond Test & Trace. Individual meetings were then held with staff, as part of transition planning to the new model. Managers worked with staff to try to identify suitable re-assignment opportunities and signpost other roles for which the person may wish to submit an application.

Staff were invited to submit an expression of interest to continue in a swabbing role in July and August and the agreed process was that the longest serving staff who expressed interest would be selected for the continuing roles.

Opportunities for re-assignment were identified in the HSE and testing staff were encouraged to send in a CV if interested. The majority of roles in the HSE including roles in hospitals have specific eligibility criteria, so it is necessary for people to apply for such posts.

Of the staff in post in Community Testing on 1 June, 282 WTE were successfully reassigned to another post in the HSE by the end of June, and 48.5 WTE returned to their substantive post in HSE.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Eileen Whelan
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programmes