



Oifig Ceannasaí Oibríochtaí,
Oibríochtaí Pobail, Cúram Príomhúil

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8th July 2022

Deputy David Cullinane,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 34020/22 - To ask the Minister for Health if there are plans to expand primary and community supports for long-Covid; if there will be expanded training modules on long-Covid for general practitioners and practice nurses; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- David Cullinane

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions (PQ 34020/22), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE recognises the need to provide follow up care and support 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 the 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 MoC recommends the development of eight Post-Acute and Six Long Covid clinics at nominated hospital sites. The aim of these clinics is to provide timely access to specialist assessment, diagnostics and multi-disciplinary rehabilitation intervention for patients who have been hospitalised and/or are experiencing persistent symptoms that have not responded to self-management and holistic interventions.

The MoC recognises that the vast majority of patients will recover without specialist care through a holistic and paced approach. Therefore, there is a need to deliver as much re-enablement and rehabilitation as possible in the community, close to patients' home and at the lowest level of complexity. General Practitioners play a key role in this regard, particularly in the initial management of patients with prolonged symptoms of Covid-19. This includes appropriate triaging of patients in the first incidence to exclude acute complications, providing holistic support, education and advice to help patients manage their symptoms and finally, sign-posting patients toward specialist Post-Acute and Long COVID clinics as required. The HSE is currently developing a pathway from GP services to specialist services which describes these processes in further detail.

The MoC also recognises the potential for primary care services to further support patients recovery and re-enablement, particularly for patients who have less complex needs and/or may require further support following discharge from specialist clinics. Many established clinics are already working closely with primary



care services in this regard and pathways of care have been created between hospital sites and their corresponding Community Health Organisations. As new clinics become operational, it is envisaged that similar cross collaborations will develop, including integrated patient care, peer support and shared learning.

Finally, as part of the implementation of the Model of Care, the HSE has engaged with the Irish College of General Practitioners and other professional bodies. Through this engagement it has identified the opportunity to provide further education and training in relation to the management of Long COVID, including when and how to refer patients to specialist services. The HSE is currently liaising with the Irish College of General Practitioners to plan information sessions regarding this.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

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

TJ Dunford
Head of Operations - Primary Care
Community Operations