



**Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Oibríochtaí**  
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí Sláinte  
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19<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Mr. Alan Farrell, TD  
Dáil Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

By email to: [alan.farrell@oir.ie](mailto:alan.farrell@oir.ie)

**Ref: PQ 16100/22**

**To ask the Minister for Health if an update will be provided on the ability of the HSE to handle a second wave of the omicron variant of the Covid-19 virus; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

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Dear Deputy Farrell,

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

I note that the Minister has already provided an initial response to your PQ which outlines the measures available to the HSE to mitigate the risks arising from the pressure on health services arising from further surges in cases of COVID-19. In addition, the following should be noted:

- The future epidemiology of COVID including variants of concern is uncertain and presents a number of service delivery challenges and risks for the HSE which are set out in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2022 (NSP2022).
- COVID-19 surges and associated hospitalisation rates have the potential to sustain or worsen existing pressures in the healthcare system and slow the pace of planned reforms in 2022. As outlined by the Department of Health, the HSE is actively working to mitigate the impact of the current COVID situation on both acute and community services.
- The HSE is continuing to utilise capacity in private hospitals and taking other measures, such as prioritising critical and time sensitive care, to reduce pressure on bed capacity.
- Patients are being requested to use alternatives such as their local pharmacist, GP or minor injury units as appropriate.
- The Government has committed funding of €20,683m to the HSE in NSP2022. This funding includes €310m of new investment (including Winter Plan); additional existing level of service investment of €727m; and additional 'once off' investment of €497m specified for all COVID-19 responses and €200m for acute and community scheduled care access (waiting lists and waiting times) which includes use of public and private hospitals. This significant additional funding will be used to progress key reforms, increase in bed capacity, including acute beds, critical care beds, hire additional staff, and expand community services, which all enable the HSE to mitigate the impact of high levels of attendances and COVID cases.



- Additionally, the HSE will ensure that there is an appropriately sized service capacity to provide vaccination, testing and tracing services in line with Government requirements; is developing the capacity and capability of its Health Protection workforce; and continues to model the impact of COVID-19 on healthcare demand and capacity to inform service delivery planning as required.

Please note that further details are available in the HSE National Service Plan 2022 published earlier this year and can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/serviceplans/hse-national-service-plan-2022.pdf>

I trust that this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Anne O'Connor  
Chief Operations Officer