



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

28th March 2022

Deputy Richard Bruton,
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2.

Rannan na nOspideil Ghearmhíochaine
Aonad 4A – Áras Dargan
An Ceantar Theas
An Bothar Mileata
Cill Mhaighneann
BÁC 8

Acute Operations
Health Service Executive
Unit 4A - The Dargan Building
Heuston South Quarter
Military Road
Kilmainham
Dublin 8.

PQ 16364/22 * To ask the Minister for Health if initiatives are being taken to extend the hours of operation of diagnostic facilities in hospitals in order to cope with the post-Covid-19 surge in needs.

Dear Deputy Bruton,

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

Response

Similar to a number of services provided in Acute Hospitals, access to diagnostics has been impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic over the past 2 years on an ongoing basis as COVID surges impact our community and capacity/access in Hospitals. In addition, diagnostic access was severely impacted by the cyber-attack in May 2022 and the impact on services was ongoing for a number of months.

A number of approaches have been progressed to support ongoing access to diagnostics which include the following.

- As part of the response to COVID access to Diagnostics has been facilitated through private hospitals
- On an ongoing basis the National Treatment Purchase fund have been providing support to hospitals for diagnostics through their commissioning process.
- Additionally, access for Acute Hospitals for a number of diagnostics have currently been made available through the community framework that supports direct access for GP's.

The HSE does not hold information centrally relating to initiatives or service developments undertaken in individual hospitals around extension of the hours of operation of diagnostic facilities in hospitals.

Significant funding has been identified through the 2022 estimates process to support access to care. The HSE is working with Hospital Groups and the NTPF to ensure that available additional funding in 2022 is targeted at access to care for patients where care delivery has been affected by the Pandemic, this includes access to diagnostics.

Additionally, *Sláintecare* recognises the need to reduce waiting times, especially for those with urgent and complex care needs. The delivery of this is dependent on several critical enablers (including diagnostics such as MRI); these relate to scaling up health service capacity, a focus on providing improved value and productivity, and radical whole-system reform so that health services are better orientated to the emerging needs of the population through a more integrated care response. This plan is currently under development with the Department of Health.

Finally, there is currently a diagnostic imaging project underway that has been commissioned by the Chief Clinical Officer of the HSE to inform longer terms plans for diagnostics the scope of which is as follows:

- To perform a demand/capacity study on the public radiology services provided in the hospital system.
- To estimate the funding/staffing/infrastructure deficit between the existing capacity and that required to meet current demand.

I trust that this answers your question.

Yours sincerely,

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

Trish King
General Manager
Acute Operations