



13 April 2022

Deputy Joe Flaherty TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Flaherty,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to this Department for response.

PQ 16863/22

To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on community specialist teams for older persons.

Context of Community Support Teams, (CSTs)

The National Public Health Emergency Team, (NPHE) recommended the establishment of an Expert Panel on Nursing Homes on 14th May 2020 to examine the complex issues surrounding the management of COVID-19 among residents in Nursing Homes. The Nursing Homes Expert Panel was appointed by the Minister for Health in May 2020 and published the COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel Report on 19th August 2020. In their report, the Expert Panel noted the significant contribution made by the Health Services Executive (HSE) Covid Response Teams (CRTs), in responding to the challenges posed by this pandemic; 'wrap-around supports established by the HSE including the aforementioned COVID-19 Response Teams, the supply of PPE, emergency staffing and clinical support, amongst other things, have been critical interventions, playing a central role in supporting nursing home residents. Taking into account pandemic learning to date, the Expert Panel also identified the need to ensure that robust clinical governance arrangements are universally in place, as well as the need for greater integration of RCFs in the wider health system in line with the overall reform programme. As a result, the Expert Panel recommends to 'Establish new integrated Community Support Teams with clearly defined joint leadership and responsibility across each CHO and hospital group area on a permanent basis [...] in the interim, the existing COVID-19 Response Teams should remain in place'.

Purpose:

CSTs will work collaboratively and maintain relationships with providers of Older Person's Residential Care Facilities and Home Support Services:

- To facilitate closer integration of RCFs with the wider health and social care system. Operating as a link between public, private and voluntary providers, and HSE specialist teams, the CST will contribute to the public health response and enhanced integrated service delivery.
- To support RCF and HSS providers to build their capacity to effectively self-manage in terms of prevention, preparedness planning and effective outbreak management in the event of further COVID-19 surges or other infectious disease outbreaks.

Implementation:

Significant preparatory and developmental work has already been undertaken to inform the development of the CSTs, including engagement with the key stakeholders through the Implementation Oversight Team (IOT) and Reference Group (including receipt of written submissions from the members of the Reference Group) and the development of operational guidance. The implementation of the CSTs will progress under the remit of the Residential Care Working group in order to provide oversight, ensure national consistency, facilitate sharing of learning, provide additional guidance where required, and to identify and mitigate implementation risks. Particular priority will be given to continued engagement and



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communication with all relevant stakeholders, including providers, staff, residents, and family members on the role and responsibilities of these new teams.

There will be a requirement for CRTs to remain in place until such time as CSTs can become fully operational.

Yours sincerely,

Sandra Broderick
Assistant National Director
Community Operations
Services for Older People