



Oifig an Príomhoifigeach
Eagraíocht Cúram Sláinte Pobail Lár Tire,
An Lú, An Mhí

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte,
Oifig Cheantair, Bóthar Ardáin,
An Tulach Mhór, Co. Uíbh Fhailí.

Office of the Chief Officer
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11th November, 2022

Mr. Paul Murphy T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: Parliamentary Question - 55724/22

To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to reports that in Mullingar Covid testing centre, the National Ambulance Service will take over Covid testing capacity and be on standby in the event of a winter surge, given that it has been well documented nationally that the NAS does not have enough personnel to cover the ambulance service; and if he will provide details of the way in which the NAS expects to manage in the event of a winter surge of Covid. -Paul Murphy

Dear Deputy Murphy,

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. I have examined the matter and I outline the position as follows.

The long-term plan for Covid-19 is to manage it in a similar way to other respiratory diseases, which is through a Surveillance and Clinical Model in primary care. This long term Model will be supported by the National Ambulance Service (NAS) who will support Emerging Threats, one of which includes a potential future surge in demand for Covid-19 testing.

The overall transition to this long-term model began earlier this year, as the criteria for testing changed, and Community Testing Centres moved to smaller facilities as demand reduced. A review has been recently undertaken to determine the model for Testing from November 2022 as we evolve to complete the full transition of the service to the long-term model. In the near term, Community Test Centres will continue to operate in order to maintain the required level of capacity within the overall system, which includes a surge capacity beyond the actual demand. In order to be able to meet this level of surge capacity it was deemed necessary to retain approximately 100 Community Testing staff nationally to Jan 2023 to work alongside the NAS capacity. This decision was informed by a range of factors including geographical considerations, synergies with NAS capacity and the current retained CHO Community Testing staffing levels including the availability of staff to support independent management of test centres, all the while working within the staffing numbers approved to be retained.



In line with the above from November 22nd NAS are taking over responsibility Covid Testing in CHO 8. All six centres will continue to operate on a six or seven-day basis and offer a safe, accessible and efficient service to members of the public requiring a Covid-19 test.

I trust the above is in order but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Des O'Flynn', written over a horizontal line.

Des O'Flynn
Chief Officer
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation