



**Stiúrtóra Náisiúnta
Acmhainní Daonna**
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí,
Sláinte Ospidéal Dr. Steevens',
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Brendan Howlin T.D.

28th September, 2022

PQ 44359/22 To ask the Minister for Health if he will set out the current position in relation to supports available to public health service employees who cannot return to work due to the ongoing effect of Covid-19; when a scheme to ensure continued support for such employees suffering from long-Covid will be put into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - Brendan Howlin

Dear Deputy,

I refer to your recent parliamentary question which was sent to the HSE for response.

The HSE has an established process for supporting HCWs to return to work following illness or injury – see the 'Rehabilitation of Employees Back to Work After Illness or Injury Policy & Procedure' - <https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/staff/rehabilitation-of-employees-back-to-work-after-illness-policy.pdf>.

This policy outlines the process for HCWs out of work, which would include HCWs with Long Covid. The employees will be referred to Occupational Health and fitness for work will be assessed. Occupational Health will make recommendations for reasonable accommodations where appropriate.

The policy outlines the process for planning the employees return to work following long term absence. It also outlines the process for HCWs where the employee is unable to return to work in their substantive position. In this case it specifies 'options for suitable alternative duties, or alternative employment options will be fully explored'. This is dealt with on a case by case basis. These employees can also access psychological support via our Employee Assistance Programme, which is a free counselling service for HSE employees.

The question of establishing specific HCW pathways for Long Covid services is currently with the Long Covid Steering Group. I currently have no update on this decision. While the decision to have a separate pathway is has been agreed by the CCO, the process for this is yet to be established. This is currently with Dr. Siobhan Ni Bhriain.

I trust that this information is sufficient to meet the Deputy's needs.

Yours sincerely,

**Marie O'Sullivan
National HR**