



9<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Deputy Denis Naughten, TD  
Dáil Eireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2.

**Re PQ 38986/20**

To ask the Minister for Health if there has been an increase in the request for substance abuse support services since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Naughten,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted a significant and sustained response by HSE Addiction services to provide ongoing care to the population with substance misuse services and a number of resources were developed for professionals and service users to adjust during this period. These resources are available here

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/other-areas/health-inequalities/guidance-documents-and-resources-addiction.html>

The priority for the Addiction service dealing with the vulnerable population with Opioid Dependence was to retain all people who were in receipt of Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) on treatment and to induct any new people onto treatment as quickly as possible. As a result of this ongoing initiative an additional 812 people were commenced on OST between the end of January 2020 and the end of October 2020. This was an overall increase of 7.7% on treatment during this period.

More generally, for HSE and HSE-funded substance use services the capacity of services has been reduced in order to maintain social distancing and adhere to public health advice. However many services have adapted to teleworking support. The extent of this impact will be



reported through the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS) figures and will not be known until early next year when the annual data has been validated and reported.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Doyle', with a checkmark to the left.

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Joseph Doyle  
National Planning Specialist