



Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Oibrioichtaí  
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí Sláinte  
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22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

Mr. Denis Naughten, TD  
Dáil Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

By email to: [Denis.Naughten@oireachtas.ie](mailto:Denis.Naughten@oireachtas.ie)

**Ref: PQ 16431/22**

**To ask the Minister for Health the long-term impact of Covid-19 on the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

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Dear Deputy Naughten,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for response. I would like to apologise for the delay in responding to you and the inconvenience caused.

The exact impact of COVID-19 on the health service is difficult to quantify in some ways, and it will only be over the course of time that this will become clearer. What can be said is that there have been delays in people seeking and/or receiving treatment as a result of curtailment of services, resulting in patients requiring higher acuity services which would not have been the case pre-pandemic. This had disproportionately impacted older people and is evidenced by our experience in our Emergency Departments.

The pandemic has and continues to have an impact on people's mental health. There has been an increase in referrals to our Mental Health Services and we have put in place a Psychosocial Response Framework to put a fully integrated strategic plan in place that can deliver a health sector psychosocial response to Covid-19.

In addition, the health impact of the COVID-19 virus itself on those who have and continue to become ill cannot be underestimated. A new model of care for those suffering from Long-COVID is being implemented to address this new and emerging health need. The exact number of people that are affected with Long COVID remains unknown, but published reports indicated that approximately 10-20% of COVID-19 patients experience lingering symptoms for weeks to months following COVID-19 infection. As part of this programme of work, the HSE is examining how it can model the possible numbers affected by Long COVID, noting that this will take time as more evidence emerges. An epidemiological survey is being planned in this regard and will be key to providing insight and understanding to the exact number of patients affected by Long COVID. This will also help to forecast future demand for services and will inform the direction of the Model of Care. A patient registry is currently being scoped out, which will be used to estimate the current and ongoing need for Post-Acute and Long COVID services.



In addition, the impact on staff across the health service is something we are acutely aware of, particularly those frontline workers who have withstood the most difficult times during the pandemic. These staff are now experiencing unprecedented pressure as a result of the significant increase in the number of people waiting treatment across many acute and community services.

I trust that this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne O'Connor', written over a horizontal line.

Anne O'Connor  
Chief Operations Officer