



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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21st December 2020

Deputy Catherine Connolly,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: catherine.connolly@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Connolly,

The Health Service Executive 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 42552/20

To ask the Minister for Health when respite care services will be deemed as an essential service; when they will be fully restored to pre-Covid-19 levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

The presence and threat of COVID-19 in Ireland has resulted in significant challenges for service providers, families and most importantly, people with disabilities. During these challenging times disability services and supports such as day services, respite services and children's services were either suspended or delivered in alternative ways in line with Public Health guidance. The HSE is aware that the changes in service delivery have resulted in significant stressors being placed on families and individuals with disabilities across Ireland.

The delivery of Respite Services continued to operate during the pandemic, albeit at a reduced capacity; some centres remained open, while others were temporarily re-purposed as isolation facilities. Throughout the pandemic, staff and resources associated with closed or curtailed services were redeployed where possible to support residential provision and to provide for targeted in-home, community and tele-/online supports for service users and families based on prioritised needs. The HSE was also mindful of the will and preference of people in terms of receiving services and in certain instances where personal choice was made to put these services on hold.

At present, centre-based respite facilities are generally providing services at 40 to 60 percent occupancy levels due to necessary precautions to maintain physical distancing and to adhere to infection prevention and control requirements. In a very small number of cases, certain centres remain closed or continue to be used for isolation purposes, subject to the prevailing local incidence of infection, but the HSE continue to work with providers locally to maximise both centre-based and alternative non-residential respite and support option to provide target support, wherever possible.

In respect of the provision of Disability Services and in the context of the Governments Resilience & Recovery Framework (2020 – 2021), the HSE regards the provision of disability services, including respite provision, as essential to maintaining a response to people with a disability.

All disability services must follow public health guidance in this area, including the prevention and management of covid related infection. The HSE and its funded disability partners will continue to provide supports, including respite services, in line with public health guidance and direction and having regard to the availability of staffing resources.

Reference is drawn to the following HSE weblink which provides updates and guidance for disability service providers, including 'service resumption planning guidance'.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>

Attention is also drawn to the following important web links which provide up to date information resources in respect of COVID-19.

www.hspc.ie

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

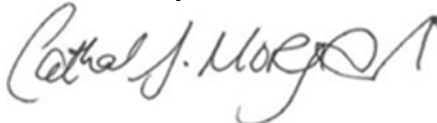
Additional funding;

The HSE and disability service providers recognise the critical need and importance of disability supports for people and their families. This includes respite care provision. The impact of COVID-19 on people's lives has and continues to be very significant. Our collective aim is to restore services and ensure continuity of services in a safe way and in line with the very significant investment made by the State and funded agencies.

In this context, we welcome the recent announcements from the Government of additional funding for Disability Services:

- An additional €100 million secured for Disability Services in the recent budget. The specific breakdown of this investment will be discussed as part of the normal service planning process and will be detailed in the National Service Plan. However, the HSE anticipates that significant funding will be allocated for the development of additional Respite Services.
- €12.5 million is being made available to support the resumption of day services and enhanced home support services for disability service users.
- €20 million in one-off grants will be provided to reform disability services, build the capacity of disability organisations and to improve the quality of life of those who rely on these services.
- €7.8 million has been allocated by Sláintecare to facilitate the HSE and its funded service providers to address the overdue Assessments of Need

Yours sincerely,



**Dr. Cathal Morgan,
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations**