



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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24th July 2020

Deputy Cathal Crowe,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: cathal.crowe@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Crowe,

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 15288/20

To ask the Minister for Health if provisions will be put in place for those in need of respite care that are unable to access it due to public health advice.

HSE Response

In preparing for and responding to COVID-19 and to fully align with Public Health guidance as recommended via the NPHE, the HSE and its partner service providers put in place a range of measures, which included the prioritisation of vital residential and home support services whilst curtailing or closing certain services such as day services, respite services, and certain clinical supports in order to; a) prioritise essential public health services at CHO level and b) ensure continued delivery of the referenced residential and home supports provision.

in the absence of regular access to some service and supports, CHOs and service providers tried to maintain services that can be delivered safely; providing outreach and telecare solutions, using technology where possible; and using creative and innovative models of care to support service users, both adults and children.

Roadmap for Reopening

In relation to Respite Services specifically, we know that a number of Respite Centres continued to operate during the pandemic, albeit at a reduced capacity; while others were temporarily re-purposed as isolation facilities.

Processes are underway in order to plan for the reintroduction of non-Covid services. In that regard the HSE has now developed a number of important guidance documents to assist disability services. These are now available on the website below and are as follows:

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

1. Framework for Resumption of Adult Day Services;
2. Reshaping Disability Services From 2020 & Beyond

The above web-link also contains a range of guidance material that was developed to support people with disabilities, families and staff including:

- Alternative Models of Care (Non-Residential)
- Frequently Asked Questions for People with Disabilities and Carers.
- Streamlined Health Passport for people with disabilities who are admitted to hospital
- Guidance on Use of PPE in Disability Services
- Guidance for supporting adults in a community residence/at home
- Guidance of supporting children in a community residence/at home
- Support coordination in a pandemic; practical checklist to avoid stressors for service users

The FAQ, in particular, explains the pathway for supports for family carers and includes dedicated guidance and advice on a range of issues relating to COVID-19 together with a list of local and national helpline numbers.

The HSE and disability representative bodies recognise that people with disabilities want their services resumed as quickly as possible. However, it may not be possible to restore services in exactly the same way as they operated previously, because of the unpredictable nature of COVID-19 and the need to continue to protect people from infection risk. As services resume, providers are making changes to ensure social distancing. For the time being, this will have an inevitable impact on service capacity. There is also a requirement to ensure strict infection prevention and control measures across services. Where possible, services are working to continue to utilise innovative measures such as tele-health or providing consultations on phone or on video calls, where possible. We are also mindful that any return to services is planned and managed in a manner that is safe for people with disabilities, their families and staff.

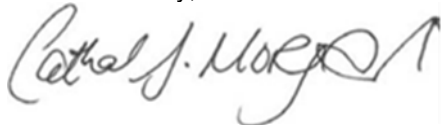
It is important to note that the all guidance is interim and subject to change in line with the overall management of the Covid-19 pandemic and in accordance with contemporary Public Health Guidance.

CHOs and S38/39 agencies continue to work together at a regional level in order to plan and co-ordinate efforts.

The HSE continues to plan the re-establishment of vital non-covid supports and services including Respite Services. This includes very careful and detailed work on the part of the Disability Sector with national guidance and will result in directing how all funded agencies can deliver services on a medium to long-term basis. Plans have to comply with guidance as set out by the National Public Health Emergency Team as well as Public Health specialists in the HSE. In this context, further guidance specifically on the provision of Respite Services is currently being prepared and will shortly be posted to the web-link above.

In addition, the Disability Sector is re-establishing a number of structures including the National Consultative Forum as well as other operational structures that will co-ordinate and support the sector as we continue to navigate this pandemic and make every effort to deliver supports and services in line with Public Health Guidance.

Yours sincerely,



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