



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

Office of the Head of Operations,
Disability Services/Social Care Division,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369
Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

29th July 2020

Deputy Brendan Smith,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: brendan.smith@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Smith,

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 19512/20

To ask the Minister for Health if he will ensure day and respite services will be restored for persons with a disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter

HSE Response

The HSE and its funded Agencies provide respite care to children and adults with disabilities including children presenting with ASD. Respite can occur in a variety of settings for various lengths of time, depending on the needs of the individual service user, the family and according to available resources. Respite is not always centre-based and can be provided in a number of ways, e.g. Centre based; In-Home; Home-to-Home; Family Support, etc. As a vital part of the continuum of services for families, respite potentially helps prevent out-of-home full-time residential placements, preserves the family unit, and supports family stability with the service users at the centre.

The HSE is very much aware of the importance of respite service provision for the families of both children and adults with disabilities, including the impact the absence of respite service provision can have on other services.

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.

Roadmap for Reopening

Whilst accepting that significant levels of services have been temporarily curtailed during the Covid- 19 pandemic, 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 also available on the above website and are as follows:

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

It is important to note that the above 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 and day 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 respect of Childrens Disability Services, a national implementation group is being established to support the reform of these services as envisaged in PDS1 and through the establishment of 'Networks' (CDNs) by year end. This remains a key a priority commitment for the HSE and its Lead Agency Partners;

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.

The CHO areas are currently discussing reopening of respite services with the service providers. The HSE is preparing further guidance, specifically on the provision of Respite Services, which we hope will be completed in the next week or so.

Resumption of adult disability day services

The HSE has been planning for the resumption of adult disability day services since the middle of May. A group representative of families, service providers and other relevant stakeholders was convened and tasked with the development of a Resumption Plan. As mentioned above, on May 31st the Framework for the Resumption of Adult Disability Day Services was published and the guidance to support this framework was published on July 8th.

Both documents are available on www.hse.ie/newdirections.

It is planned that disability day services for adults will resume on a gradual basis during the month of August.

When services resume they will be building on the significant supports that have been provided to day service recipients during COVID 19. In that regard the following service information relates:-

Of the approximately **19,000 adults** in receipt of day service supports the following supports have been provided during COVID 19:

- Almost **5,000** of these adults have received a full 24/7 service which includes individualised supports in line with their dreams and wishes.
- A **further 4,000 adults** continue to receive face to face supports albeit at a reduced level (Covid safety)
- Of the **1,000 day service locations** nationally, HSE funded day services continued to provide supports at almost **300** locations to support people who were in a priority category with families under significant pressure.

During COVID 19, much has been learned about new ways of providing supports due to the restrictions imposed as a consequence of the pandemic and when services resume in August this new learning will also apply.

The guidance developed to support the resumption of adult day services has had to take account of social distancing rules which will mean that there will be a reduced number of people in each service location. However, the HSE is committed to maximising the support that can be provided within these restrictions.

The focus will be very much on the Personal Plan for each individual and the provision of supports to enable people to achieve their goals. The Personal Plan will also have to take account of family circumstances and the stress and pressure experienced by some parents and carers over the last number of months.

Over the coming weeks the focus of work to support the resumption of adult disability day services will be as follows:-

- Providers will plan to resume day services which will see the opening up of locations from August.
- Providers are required to liaise with people with disabilities and their families to discuss how best to meet their support needs in the context of public health guidance.
- People will return to services but at reduced hours per week; however, the HSE and service providers will keep in review this measure and as public health guidance evolves, our capacity to provide supports will adapt accordingly.
- For some people with disabilities, it may be more appropriate to provide supports in their own home.
- Each person's personal plan will guide the package of supports that they will receive.
- Where families are experiencing significant challenges or where there is an emergency, the HSE and providers will work positively to assist and support those families to the greatest possible extent.
- Providers are exploring options such as the use of other community facilities to augment capacity.
- People that have left school and require a day service will be introduced to a new service during September and it is important to note that ring-fenced resources have been provided to facilitate same as part of the HSE's National Service Plan (2020).

As services resume, a critical issue will be the requirement to ensure strict infection control to ensure that service users, their families and the staff that support them are kept safe and infection free.

HSE led Summer Programme (Covid-19 measures) for Children with Significant Complex Needs

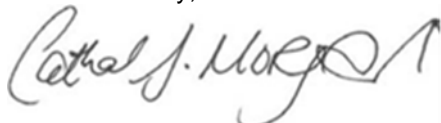
The HSE and its children's disability service providers will aim to provide a summer programme in each community healthcare network in collaboration with Disability funded organisations and the Education sector. Notably, the Department of Education has worked with the health sector on the basis of a voluntary temporary reassignment scheme to facilitate Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

The programme seeks to deliver activities over a 6 week period;

- Provision of short respite breaks for children with complex needs and their families
- Facilitate children with complex needs to begin the transition from their homes to re-engaging with their communities and schools
- Provide safe opportunities for children with complex needs to engage with their peers

Staff in children's disability services will provide direction and support for SNAs to deliver the programme. The input of these teams will ensure that the activities are tailored to the needs of the children. As of 03 July 2020, 425 SNAs have volunteered to participate in the HSE led summer programme. It is important to note that the programme will conclude before end August in order to ensure SNAs have had an opportunity to have a break and in advance of resumption of school based education commencement. Please note also that the number of SNAs may rise as contacts are being made on a continuous basis.

Yours sincerely,



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