



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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

Deputy Chris Andrews
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: chris.andrews@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Andrews,

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 10507/20

To ask the Minister for Health the supports planned for children with disabilities and their families that are suffering during the Covid-19 lockdown and require support; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

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.

Additionally, I can also clarify that the HSE is recommencing work in relation to the setting up of Childrens Disability Networks with our agency partners, with Network Managers currently being appointed.

Under the governance of the HSEs National Integrated Operations Hub chaired by the COO and work relating to vulnerable people, Disability Operations has a team in place with the responsibility for providing supports and capacity building training for the sector. To date, a range of guidance material has been 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

For the full list of Guidance/Advice documentation, see the below web link which is the central repository for disability specific guidance material during the COVID-19 emergency.

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

Roadmap for Reopening

Processes are underway in order to plan for the reintroduction of non-Covid services including respite 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 therapy 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.

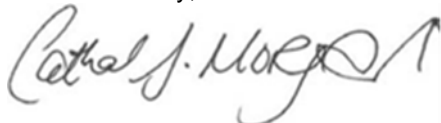
'Health led summer programme' for children with complex disability needs

The HSE is implementing the temporary reassignment of Special Needs Assistants to work with healthcare staff in reaching our most vulnerable children with disabilities and their families, as part of our effort to increase the availability of supports.

The HSE and the Department of Education have agreed that SNAs can now opt, on a voluntary basis, for the HSE led programme over the Summer months.

This programme is currently being rolled out. Many children and young people with disabilities and their families are experiencing significant challenges as they adjust to significant periods without access to school routines, therapy services, respite and / or afterschool supports. The HSE and its disability partners will endeavour to provide alternative supports to these families with the assistance of SNAs who have valuable skills in this regard.

Yours sincerely,



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

Community Operations