



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
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10th July 2020

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

Dear Deputy Murphy,

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 12990/20

To ask the Minister for Health if new initiatives have been provided with respect to respite care in the context of Covid-19 in view of the loss of school time which provided a type of respite for full-time carers of children with disabilities; if he has considered initiatives with the Minister for Education and Skills; if so, the initiatives; 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 NPHET, 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. 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.

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 03rd 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 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**