



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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19th June 2020

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: aengus.osnodaigh@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Ó Snodaigh,

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 9646/20

To ask the Minister for Health the number of disability therapy staff that have been redeployed on Covid-19 work; the number that have returned to their original posts; the timetable for all therapy staff to recommence working with children with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

In March 2020 the World Health Organisation declared a world pandemic. The seriousness of emergency with regard to COVID-19 required an unprecedented response by the Government, which having considered European Centre for Disease Control and National Public Health Emergency Team advice, announced schools and services closures, restricted social interaction and travel.

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, as well as 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.

Effective redeployment of health service employees was a core element of the response in the HSE to COVID-19. Hospital groups and Community Health Organisations (CHOs) continuously redeployed staff to support their business continuity plans, emerging services developing in direct response to COVID 19 and in response to the health and availability of staff in their own organisations.

Having said that some services continued with therapists working with service users and their families remotely and using technology in new and effective ways.

In the same way corporate and national services, together with Tusla, also made staff available to support the overall HSE effort during this time.

HSE National HR-Strategic Workforce Planning and Intelligence collect information regarding the redeployment of staff to other services such as the helplines, national effort including contact tracing, testing, public health, service support and other areas. They have informed us however, that they don't report



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specifically on staff category or grade. For that reason we cannot definitively confirm the number of disability therapy staff that have been redeployed to Covid-19 work.

In this regard, it is important to emphasise that we are now in the process of detailed planning in order to recover these services in line with the Governments' Roadmap. It is important to note that this must be supported by way of assurance and oversight from the HSE's Chief Clinical Officer along with the NPHET, so that we can do so in a safe manner. This means that therapies, whilst being delivered in new ways, will gradually be re-introduced to children with disabilities. Therefore, therapists will be required to revert to their substantive assignment as part of a planned and co-ordinated approach in each CHO.

Roadmap for Reopening

Whilst accepting that significant levels of vital therapies have been temporarily curtailed, 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;

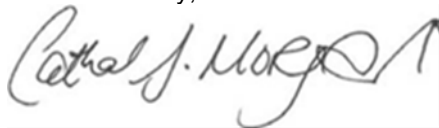
CHOs and S38/39 agencies continue to work together at a regional level in order to plan and co-ordinate efforts.

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

Yours sincerely,



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