



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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

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19<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh,  
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Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
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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 9650/20**

*To ask the Minister for Health the timeframe for moving all persons with disabilities out of congregated settings in view of the fact the timeframe in the national policy Time to Move on from Congregated Settings has passed; and when the remaining 2,000 or 2,900 persons will move into homes in the community*

#### **HSE Response**

##### **A Time to Move on from Congregated Settings**

In June 2011 the Report “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – A Strategy for Community Inclusion” was published, which identified that in 2008 approximately 4,000 individuals with disabilities lived in congregated type settings, defined as where ten or more people reside in a single living unit or are campus based. It found that notwithstanding the commitment and initiative of dedicated staff and management, that there were a significant number of people still experiencing institutional living conditions where they lacked basic privacy and dignity, and lived their lives apart from any community and family.

The report recommended a seven year timeframe for the implementation of the policy and the 2016 Programme for Government identified that there should be a one- third reduction in the number of individuals residing on congregated settings by the year 2021, which reflects the continued commitment of the Government to the policy of decongregation, whilst acknowledging that the process of supporting each person to transition from a congregated setting to a community based service in a sustainable and safe way requires planning and time.

##### **Status of congregated Settings**

Prior to the outbreak of the current Covid 19 pandemic, Time to Move On from Congregated Settings was progressing and continues to demonstrate very positive results for service users who have transitioned to living in homes in community settings.

Overall, the population in congregated settings at end 2019 was 50% lower than those identified in the original report with less than 2,000 people remaining in congregated settings.



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Pointedly, the COVID 19 pandemic has highlighted the stark reality of the risk to health that living in a congregated setting can present for the residents. The vast majority of people with disabilities living in the residential services now live in small group homes with no more than nine others and of those that remain in congregated settings, 1,554 people (almost 80%) are now living in houses and units on a campus with less than 9 other co-habitants.

### **Time frame and Potential Challenges**

With regard to a time frame, there is firm commitment to continue with the decongregation programme. The proposed Programme for Government includes among its objectives the continuation of the successful decongregation programme and commits to a further move of people with disabilities from congregated settings to homes in the community, with the necessary supports. (page 90)

Over the past two years, progress has been slowed by challenges in the housing market in identifying, acquiring, and converting suitable accommodation in the community. While it is not expected that the demand for housing will ease off in the foreseeable future, in order to overcome these challenges, the HSE is continuing with the programme of sourcing suitable accommodation through its own Estates Management unit and through commissioning a number of specialised housing providers.

Yours sincerely,



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