



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>

28<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Deputy Cathal Crowe,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [cathal.crowe@oireachtas.ie](mailto:cathal.crowe@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Crowe,

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 5817/20**

*To ask the Minister for Health the provisions in place for supports for children with special needs and or disabilities during the Covid-19 pandemic (details supplied); and if support will be provided in the home.*

Details supplied: Some of those who have been on publicly funded support schemes are now being forced to pay for private care

#### **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.

HSE Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) are continuing to proactively engage with disability service providers to ensure that appropriate contingency arrangements are made so that the necessary supports are put in place for persons with disabilities including children with special needs and their families. I should note that in the absence of regular access to some service and supports, CHOs and service providers have 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.

I also want to draw attention to some important work we have been undertaking in terms of contingency measures/ guidance that HSE and disability umbrella bodies have jointly delivered.

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

The FAQ, in particular, explains the pathway for supports for family carers and includes dedicated guidance and advice on a range of issues relating to COVID-19 together with a list of local and national helpline numbers.

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/>

In addition, family carers are also advised to keep an eye on the following weblinks for guidance and advisory links (including in terms of social care/ clinical matters) relating to COVID-19, as well as the Inclusion Ireland and Family Carers Ireland websites and helplines.

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/>

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/at-risk-groups.html>

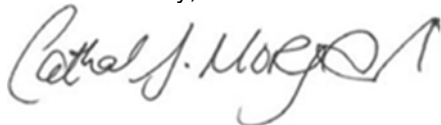
<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/primarycareguidance/adviseriskassessmentandmanagementofpatients/>

As COVID-19 is an evolving and unprecedented situation, the HSE will continue to review and update guidance and advice to its staff, service providers, service users and families.

In addition, as part of our planned COVID-19 related measures, the HSE hopes to implement 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. 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.

It is important to emphasise that since the publication of the Governments 'Roadmap for reopening Society & Business' as well as the 'Return to work safely' protocol, the HSE is finalising plans to re-establish vital non-covid supports and 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. In effect this means that the HSE will soon set out its plans in terms of how we can safely begin to commence services, which will have to comply with guidance as set out by the National Public Health Emergency Team as well as Public Health specialists in the HSE.

Yours sincerely,



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