



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,**  
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27<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Deputy Joe Flaherty,  
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Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
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Dear Deputy Flaherty,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary questions, which were submitted to this department for response.

**PQ 6476/20**

*To ask the Minister for Health when it will be possible to offer a return of respite care for special needs children; and his plans to safeguard such children.*

**PQ 6606/20**

*To ask the Minister for Health when it will be possible to offer a return of respite care for special needs children in the context of the roadmap for reopening the country and the resumption of full services; and the plans and safeguards in place to protect special needs children (details supplied)*

Details Supplied: It is unquestionable that some of our most vulnerable children are suffering acutely and a return to normality must be prioritised for him

**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. 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.

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.

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.

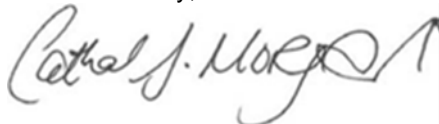
Under the governance of the HSEs National Integrated Operations Hub chaired by the COO and work relating to vulnerable people, Disability Operations has a team in place with the responsibility for providing supports and capacity building training for the sector. To date, a range of guidance material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

- Alternative Models of Care (Non-Residential)
- Streamlined Health Passport for people with disabilities who are admitted to hospital
- Coronavirus (Covid-19) Frequently Asked Questions for people with disabilities and family carers
- Guidance for 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/>

Yours sincerely,



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