



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
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5<sup>th</sup> November 2020,  
Deputy Bríd Smith,  
Dail Eireann,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ Number: 32840/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health the reason the HSE are handing over the governance, care and accommodation needs of vulnerable persons in sheltered accommodation to an approved housing body; and if he will further clarify issues (details supplied).**

**Details Supplied:** Hail. Will HSE staff currently caring for the residents of these homes continue in their role? If they are replaced by Hail staff, will the new staff be registered Psychiatric nurses? If the new staff caring for residents are not Psychiatric nurses what qualifications will they have? How many housing units currently run by the HSE are being transferred to Hail? How many residents are affected by this move?

Dear Deputy Smith,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (*NHSPWD*) 2011-2016 was published jointly by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (now Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) (DHPLG) and the Department of Health (DoH) in 2011. The Strategy sets out the Government's broad framework for the delivery of housing for people with disabilities through mainstream housing options. The Strategy and Implementation Framework (published in 2012) were developed as part of a coherent framework, in conjunction with the Government's mental health policy *A Vision for Change*. All of these were adopted as the policy framework to support people with disabilities to access community-based living with maximum independence and choice. Building on the commitment given in the *Programme for Government* to meet the housing needs of people with disabilities, the *NHSPWD* was re-affirmed in *Rebuilding Ireland* and extended to 2020 to continue to deliver on its aims.

The *NHSPWD* gives effect to the housing commitments contained in the Government's mental health policy, *A Vision for Change*. Priority Action 5.3 of the *Implementation Framework* for the *NHSPWD* seeks to facilitate the transitioning of people with mental health difficulties with low and medium supports needs, from HSE mental health facilities to appropriate community settings.

A Pilot project was undertaken in Laois/Offaly in 2016/2017 which supported 14 persons to transition to community living arrangements as AHB tenants in a home of their choice. The Housing Agency carried out a final review of the Project at the end of 2017 and found it had many positive outcomes for the persons involved, thereby providing a good model on which to implement the national roll out in 2018. Funding for the tenancy



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sustainment element of the national roll out of the Project is met jointly by the DHPLG and the HSE. The total cost of ten Tenancy Sustainment Officers (TSO's) is €1.8m over a three-year programme 2018-2020.

The Pilot project demonstrated that two distinct types of support are needed for people transitioning to community living with full tenancy rights and obligations. Firstly, **medical support** to maintain their mental health recovery, which will be provided by the HSE multi-disciplinary Community Health Care Team; and, secondly, **'social care'** support in adjusting to more independent living including issues such as maintaining a tenancy, paying bills, maintaining their homes to a reasonable standard, integrating into the community etc. This support is to be provided by the Tenancy Sustainment Officers who are directly employed by the AHB.

Following the pilot project and as part of the national implementation of the NHSPWD, Hail Housing are one of a number of AHB's across the country who have been commissioned by the Housing Agency in the provision of social housing and tenancies to people who currently live in HSE owned low and medium supported accommodation. High support community residences (those that have 24 hour HSE staffing) are not within the scope of this project and remain under the HSE structures.

In a majority of cases, existing HSE residents have no legal rights or tenancy arrangements in place and the standard of most properties would fall below that expected within social housing provided by an AHB. Those current HSE residents who are wanting to transfer across by becoming a tenant of the AHB not only avail of improved living standards with many properties being renovated and updated, but they also gain the legal security of having a tenancy agreement and a home for life. The HSE was never set up to act as a social housing landlord and part of this strategy is to ensure that the appropriate state agencies are providing what they are best placed and funded to deliver. In the case of the HSE, the care element remains unchanged and will be delivered as described in each person's community care plan, a document drawn up between the HSE community team clinicians in consultation with the individual themselves. Such a care plan will clearly outline the clinical requirements and supports that a person needs in order for them to function to their highest ability within their community setting. The care/clinical aspect of any care plan is the responsibility of the HSE and will be delivered by members of the multi-disciplinary mental health teams.

Through a partnership arrangement between the HSE and the AHB, the social care supports as described above such as paying bills, budgeting, keeping the house clean and tidy and so on are supported by the AHB through the use of dedicated Tenancy Support Workers who work closely with HSE Clinical staff to ensure a complete social and clinical support package is in place thereby reducing the risk of people's mental illness/symptom deteriorating.

The National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (NHSPWD) 2011-2016 and Implementation Framework (2012) recognise that access to appropriate housing is fundamental to the achievement of independence and the nine Strategic Aims are the building blocks on which this is being achieved year-to-year. The Strategy supports the Department of Health/HSE policy on de-congregation Time to Move On from Congregated Settings-A Strategy for Community inclusion and the housing elements of the mental health policy A Vision for Change.



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The right to live independently in the community with choices equal to those in wider society with the necessary supports (if required) is provided for in Article 19 of the Convention on rights for persons with disabilities . This means that people with disabilities may choose their place of residence and with whom they wish to live and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement. For a number of years now disability strategy and policy in Ireland across a range of services has put a strong focus on putting in place the appropriate structures to ensure that people with disabilities are enabled, through mainstream service provision policy, to live happily and independently in inclusive communities.

Participation in community life is one of the principle philosophies underpinning the mental health tenancy sustainment project for people with low to medium mental health needs. This project is specifically designed to meet Strategic Aim 5 of the NHSPWD insofar as it relates to the housing needs of a defined group of mental health service users, recognising that the provision of appropriate supports is vital to their recovery and their integration into the community.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sinead Reynolds'.

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Dr Sinead Reynolds  
General Manager Mental Health Services