



13th November, 2020

Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ ref 36739/20 - To ask the Minister for Health the provisions that will be provided to increase capacity in overnight respite care for persons with disabilities from the current four beds for the entire Inishowen region, County Donegal; his future plans for meeting the needs of the service users and their families; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Mac Lochlainn,

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.

There are four designated respite centres in County Donegal. Currently two of these, Riverwalk Respite House in Inishowen and Drumboe Respite House in Stranorlar, are providing emergency respite services for four adults. These emergency arrangements have impacted on the Intellectual Disability Service's ability to continue respite services as previously delivered to the wider population.

In addition, where Donegal Intellectual Disability residential service users require to be isolated due to Covid-19, respite houses may need to be used for a small number of service users if the service user cannot be isolated safely in their usual place of residence or where other service users in their usual place of residence would be unable to comply with maintaining a distance from the service user required to isolate. Isolation can arise as a requirement for a variety of reasons but in compliance with Public Health guidance, it is a requirement when a residential service user is symptomatic of Covid-19 or when they are discharged from an acute hospital setting. The latter has arisen on a number of occasions in the Intellectual Disability Services.

Every effort is being made by the service to maximise the respite capacity available and to explore alternative options. Staff have identified a number of persons who are compatible with the people who are currently receiving emergency respite and those identified are availing of the remaining respite bed in Riverwalk, Inishowen on a rotational basis.

Currently, there are no vacant residential places within Donegal to which the service users in emergency respite care may be transferred. However, plans are under way to reduce their current dependency on respite care and/or to provide residential places for these service users. If these plans are successful, the Intellectual Disability Service can resume respite provision for other persons with disabilities on a more frequent basis. Provision of residential places will be dependent on funding to the service in its allocated 2021 budget.

The Intellectual Disability Service has completed a prioritisation assessment using the National Framework for the Resumption of Respite Services. Those prioritised for respite will be allocated respite in Ballymacool Respite Centre, Letterkenny or Seaview House Mountcharles if this is suitable or they will be offered a home support package to provide respite within their own homes if they wish to avail of this.

The Intellectual Disability Service is acutely aware of the difficulties that this situation is posing for persons with disabilities and their families. Respite Managers are maintaining regular contact with families in order to put alternatives in place wherever possible. This matter is being kept under constant review and planning is ongoing to maximize the amount of respite care supports to service users and their families.

The need for funding to be provided to the Donegal Disability Service in order to provide additional respite beds in Co Donegal has been identified as a need in its 2021 financial submissions.

I trust that this is of assistance but please do not hesitate to contact me if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely



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