

28th October 2020

Deputy Holly Cairns,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 30337/20

“To ask the Minister for Health the number of day centres in Cork city and county that have closed since mid-March 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic; the location of each centre; the service provided by each centre; the number of users deprived of services as a result of the closures; the analysis undertaken by HSE community healthcare west in regard to the closures and the impact on users; if he will provide a copy of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Additional information supplied: The question relates to Disability Services

Dear Deputy Cairns,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Disability Services has been working with our service providers to ensure the safe delivery of services to our service users at this time as a priority in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic. The volume of cases and complexity of needs presenting required service providers to adapt their service delivery models to support people’s needs within the challenges and restrictions arising from the presence of Covid 19 in Ireland. These circumstances have resulted in many challenges for service providers, families and for people with disabilities. Services such as day services, outreach, home support and PA services were suspended or delivered in an alternative way following public health guidance. The change in service delivery has resulted in significant stressors being placed on families and individuals with disabilities across Cork Kerry Community Healthcare

The HSE and service providers are acutely aware of this and have been working to provide alternative supports and services in ways that take account of the public health and infection control requirements. This has included maintaining services that could be delivered safely; providing outreach and telehealth solutions, using technology where possible to meet the greatest needs. In these times of such uncertainty, it was imperative that the vulnerable members of our community remained supported by Disability Services and the Service Providers.

As agencies vary significantly in terms of size, quantum of people supported, building capacity and staffing resources, it is unclear and not possible to fully predict when traditional models of services will resume as per pre-covid functioning and whilst the majority of day services are in fact open for 5 days a week, unfortunately to comply with social distancing and public health advice, many locations can only safely accommodate a smaller number of people on site at any given time and it is anticipated that this will be the case for the duration of COVID. Most Service users are being supported by at

least 1 or 2 Days on site, with the remainder of their Services being offered through a blend/ suite of services as indicated above. Each agency is working to provide a level of service to all individuals who previously attended day service locations. New models of service have evolved including remote supports via tele communications, outreach, phone contacts and physical attendance to day service locations.

Additional resources of €1.5 million have been provided nationally for the provision of increased technology to enhance communications and engagement between services and attendees. The Disability Team have reviewed the needs with the service providers in the region and have identified how this funding will be allocated. The portion allocated to Cork and Kerry is €218,848 has been notified to the service providers in the region.

In the context of Covid 19, Disability Services was recently notified of additional once off funding to assist service providers in the context of service resumption. The National Disability Office have set out specific access criteria for this funding. The Disability Services team in Cork and Kerry are working through these specifics with the service providers in relation to the allocation of this funding and the associated service capacity impact. It is envisaged that the funding received will create short term capacity to deliver and enhance onsite day service provision. Examples of once off utilisation of this funding may include transport, booking of sessional rooms or expanding the footprint of a location to allow more people to attend the location at any one time.

Disability Services is acutely aware that the Covid pandemic and associated reduction/cancellation of services has resulted in significant stressors being placed on families and individuals with disabilities across Cork Kerry Community Healthcare. We continue to engage with our Service Providers to ensure that the maximum possible service level is resumed and maintained, based on prioritising those with the greatest needs.

Please see hereunder a link to the day services portal which provides information on day services at this unprecedented time.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/newdirections/cho%204%20%20service%20provider%20resumption%20of%20adult%20day%20services.pdf>

I trust this clarifies the situation for you.

Yours sincerely



Ms. Jackie Daly,
Interim Head of Disability Services,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare