



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/Community Operations,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369

Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

23rd September 2020

Deputy Holly Cairns,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: holly.cairns@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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 23158/20

To ask the Minister for Health when the full range of disability services will be resumed.

HSE Response

The presence and threat of COVID-19 in Ireland has resulted in significant challenges for service providers, families and most importantly, people with disabilities. During these challenging times disability services and supports such as residential services, day services, home supports, Personal Assistant supports, respite services and children's services were either suspended or delivered in alternative ways in line with Public Health guidance. The HSE is aware that the changes in service delivery have resulted in significant stressors being placed on families and individuals with disabilities across Ireland.

In the absence of regular, scheduled day services, respite supports and multidisciplinary 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. The HSE was also mindful of the will and preference of people in terms of receiving services and in certain instances where personal choice was made to put these services on hold.

Under the governance of the HSE's National Integrated Operations Hub chaired by the Chief Operations Officer and work relating to vulnerable people, Disability Operations put a team in place with the responsibility for providing supports and capacity building training for the sector. A range of guidance material was developed to support people with disabilities, families and staff including;

- Alternative Models of Support (Non-Residential);
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) 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;
- Interim Guidance on Conducting Assessments in Disability Services;
- Guidance to Support the Resumption of Children's Disability Services.

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

Central to the above, there has been continued engagement and liaison with National Disability Representative Bodies on behalf of Service Providers and Family/Service Users & Care Representation Groups representing the interest of service users, their families as well as provider organisations.

These forums work as a team, with each having specific and identified work streams, working through regular tele and video-conference. Taking this approach ensured two-way communication as well as establishing working groups with assigned tasks in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

The Disability Operations Team Work Streams re COVID-19 undertook the following important measures;

- Engagement with Service Providers/Umbrella Organisations which involved co-ordination and communication between Community [Disability] Operations and the S38/39 Disability Representative Bodies;
- Guidance and Capacity Building for Vulnerable People which involved Design and Delivery of a National Sectoral 'Frontline Services' Support Programme aimed at Disability Services Supporting Vulnerable People;
- Re-assignment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) which involved the temporary assignment of SNAs to provide supports in Children's Disability Services during the school term and a further voluntary assignment during July / August;
- Engagement with Service Users and Families to act as a channel of communication to family representative organisations;
- Adapting Models of Support which involved developing alternative and innovative models of support for Vulnerable Children/ Young People & Adults (and their families) with a disability, experiencing prolonged periods of isolation;
- The Built Environment/Resources which involved monitoring and providing guidance, in conjunction with CHOs, regarding the use of new and existing capacity in disability services.

Resumption of Disability Services

In respect of the provision of Disability Services and in the context of the Governments Resilience & Recovery Framework (2020 – 2021), the HSE regards the provision of disability services as essential to maintaining a response to people with a disability. All disability services must follow public health guidance in this area, including the prevention and management of covid related infection. The HSE and its funded disability partners will continue to provide residential, including respite, and day services in line with public health guidance and direction and having regard to the availability of staffing resources.

Reference is drawn to the following HSE weblink which provides updates and guidance for disability service providers, including 'service resumption planning guidance'.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>

Attention is also drawn to the following important web links which provides up to date information resources in respect of covid.

www.hspc.ie

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

Adult Day Services

In line with public health guidance, at the outset of the pandemic, adult day services, along with many other services, were significantly reduced to limit exposure to COVID-19. The HSE engaged with providers to ensure that where possible, some level of service was maintained, based on prioritising those with the greatest needs. In this respect, Providers continued to provide outreach supports to people in the greatest need.

Of the approx. **19,000 adults** in receipt of day service supports the following supports have been provided;

- Almost **5,000** of these adults received a full 24/7 service which includes individualised supports
- A further **4,000 adults** received face to face supports albeit at a reduced level (Covid safety)
- Of the **1,000 day service locations** nationally, HSE funded day services continued to provide supports at almost **300** locations to support people who were in a priority category with families under significant pressure.

One of the core principles of day service supports is community inclusion and active citizenship. Whilst adults with disabilities attend a service location – generally this location acts as a hub and where possible supports are provided in the community and people are supported to access a whole range of community based services. The closing down of society and lack of access to the community led to the development of new ways of working by the service provider sector, including a range of programmes focusing on mental health and wellbeing, physical exercise e.g. Yoga, Pilates etc. Adults in receipt of Rehabilitative Training in some instances had their normal daily programme delivered remotely so it was full service delivery for this group but by remote working.

The HSE worked closely with service providers through representative organisations such as the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers, Disability Federation of Ireland and the Not for Profit Association and Inclusion Ireland, who represent people with intellectual disabilities and their families, to develop a Framework for the resumption of day services and a guidance document to support this.

Over the past weeks, Providers have planned for the return of day services, balancing the need to restore this essential service while at the same time implementing public health guidance:

- Each Provider has developed a plan for the resumption of day services during August and early September
- Dates for the opening of each service are published on a Portal on the HSE website at www.hse.ie/newdirections
- 90% of day services will have re-opened by the end of August and the remaining services will re-open in mid-late September
- Services will be provided at a reduced rate of approximately 40% of usual services, to 14,000 people with disabilities allowing for social distancing and infection control measures. The HSE and service providers will keep this under review and as public health guidance evolves, our capacity to provide supports will adapt accordingly.
- It is planned to capture the detail of the service being provided to each individual at end of September.
- 5,000 people, who also avail of residential services, will receive a full day service. However, this will typically be provided from the residential service to minimise the movement of people
- Providers have communicated with families to discuss what service can be provided and to make arrangements for the safe return to services for the person with a disability. For some people with disabilities, it may be more appropriate to provide supports in their own home
- Transport presents particular challenges. Families are being asked, where possible to assist with providing transport. Where this is not possible, Providers are making arrangements for limited transport services in line with current guidance for transport providers
- All CHO's have provided details of the financial challenges associated with the reopening of day services. These are being considered currently in the context of the Winter Plan
- Where families are experiencing significant challenges or where there is an emergency, the HSE and providers will work positively to assist and support those families to the greatest possible extent

- People that have left school and require a day service will be introduced to a new service during September and it is important to note that ring-fenced resources have been provided to facilitate same as part of the HSE's National Service Plan (2020)
- The HSE has worked with the Department of Education to develop a support system to facilitate the transition of young people into HSE funded adult day services considering that they have been at home since mid-May. Substitute teaching hours are being made available by DOE to support the transitioning of these young people from school to adult day services.
- Since day services have resumed comparisons are being made by families regarding the resumption of full educational services with the expectation that full day services should also be resumed. Communication is being developed to support service providers to address this issue with families.
- Plans are advanced to profile the needs of young people due to leave school in 2021.

Staff training has been completed and the process will commence this month. The procedure for profiling has been revised and will be carried out remotely where possible.

In addition, a business case to extend supports in disability day services is being considered in the context of resourcing a range of services being incorporated in the Winter Plan.

Resumption of Children's Disability Services

Children's Disability Services were stepped down in March 2020 in line with government recommendations to minimise spread of COVID-19. Through the pandemic, services continued to be provided on the phone/online and also, face to face for some children and families with high prioritised needs, taking all of the required infection prevention and control (IPC) precautions and in line with HSE's Alternative Models of Support (Non-Residential)(March 31st). On July 31st, the HSE issued the Guidance to Support Resumption of Children's Disability Services <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/guidance-to-support-resumption-of-children-disability-services.pdf>

This guidance applies to all Children's Disability Network Teams and those services planning reconfiguration into CDNTs. The Guidance clearly maps the pathway of access to services and supports, commencing with on phone/online supports, and where that does not meet the needs of the child and/or their family, moving to face to face interventions and what is required to do so safely.

The HSE's Chief Clinical Officer also issued Interim Guidance on Conducting Assessments in Disability Services. This document which was circulated in July 2020 applies to both children's and adult services.

As an additional response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Special Needs Assistants were temporarily reassigned from the Department of Education & Skills to support HSE funded children's disability services. At June 30th, when this reassignment ceased 263 SNAs were matched to children with complex needs, providing a range of centre and home based supports.

A further cross sectoral agreement facilitated the allocation of SNAs on a voluntary basis to support a range of HSE led summer programmes for children with complex needs.

The HSE, in partnership with Section 38 and Section 39 service providers, schools, preschools, community groups and sports partnership organisations provided a range of supports for children with complex needs during July / August 2020. Children's Disability Services worked with SNAs to deliver these supports in schools, community centres, homes and other locations across the country. Examples of the programmes provided included:

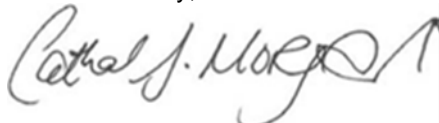
- In home supports to provide short respite breaks for families;
- SNAs working with Family Support Workers to provide in home supports for children with high support needs;
- SNAs implementing home programmes developed by Children's Disability Services;
- Centre based day respite;
- Centre based day respite with added therapeutic interventions;
- 3 day / week community run summer camp extended to 5 days / week with HSE and SNA support;
- Horse riding for 3 hours per day (weekly for 3 weeks);
- 1 week yoga camp for children with ASD;

- 1 week surf camp for children with ASD;

In addition, children's disability services provided support to a number of DES school based programmes.

The HSE and Service Providers recognise the critical need and importance of disability supports for people and their families. The impact of COVID-19 on people's lives has and continues to be very significant. Our collective aim is to restore services in a safe way and in line with the very significant investment made by the State and funded agencies and we will continue to work with service users and their families/carers to ensure that we achieve this aim.

Yours sincerely,



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



Seirbhís Sláinte
Níos Fearr
á Forbairt

Building a
Better Health
Service