



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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28th September 2020

Deputy Catherine Connolly,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: catherine.connolly@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Connolly,

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 23687/20

To ask the Minister for Health if his Department or the HSE has carried out an analysis into the effects of the ongoing closure of day centres for adults with disabilities; the number of day centres which remain closed since the outbreak of Covid-19 in Ireland; the number of day centres which have reopened to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

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 acknowledges the impact and effects of the closure of day centres for adults with disabilities during the current COVID-19 pandemic and is fully cognisant of the stress this can cause to people with disabilities and their families.

To mitigate the difficulties, 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.
- 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 commenced during August. The procedure for profiling has been revised and will be carried out remotely where possible.

The HSE was very aware of the stress and pressure on families that were caring for their loved ones on a full time basis when day service locations were closed from Mid March through to the end of July. The service was also aware of how much service users missed their friends and their community based activities which are now a prominent part of day service supports. During those months supports were provided to service users within the parameters of the COVID guidance and many service innovations were developed to support people at home eg Zoom classes, support packs etc.

Reopening of Services

Closure of day Services is not ongoing as the resumption of day services commenced early in August with most locations now open.

With regard to the HSE website referenced above www.hse.ie/newdirections on August 4th, the HSE uploaded details of the resumption dates of all disability day service locations on this portal.

The only locations that the HSE is aware of that have remained closed at this time are those locations that have been redeployed for COVID Test/Isolation Units. Some additional replacement locations have been secured and others are being sought however, there will be some lead in time until they are ready for occupation. In the meantime outreach supports are being provided for adults that would usually attend at these locations.

More detail will be available by mid October as to the state of day service resumption and the quantum of service being provided

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.

Please find attached the most recent (11/10/20) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Service Providers to support the Resumption of Adult Disability Day Services

In addition, 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/>

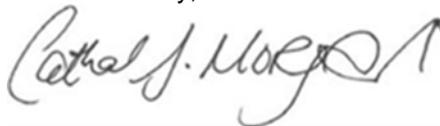
Attention is also drawn to the following important web links which provides up to date information resources in respect of covid.

www.hspc.ie

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

in addition, the HSE welcomes the recent announcement from Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly TD and Minister of State for Disability Anne Rabbitte TD that €10 million is being made available to support the resumption of day services and enhanced home support services for disability service users. The €10 million funding is being drawn down from the National Action Plan on COVID-19 - €7.5 million will increase the level of day service provision and €2.5 million will provide intensive support packages for children and young people with complex/high support needs

Yours sincerely,



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