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5 October 2020

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae, TD  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Healy-Rae,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) 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 24867/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health the steps being taken to ensure the day care centres for the elderly will be reopened safely without further delay (details supplied - Many older people are missing the day care services they attended before the Covid pandemic ); and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Day Care for older people provides a key component in the range of services available in the community for the support of Older People and is delivered in a myriad of settings including day care attached to Day Hospitals, dementia specific day care and stand-alone day care centres under the governance of the HSE or through service level arrangements with voluntary agencies funded through Section 39 funding. HSE funding provided for 28,000 Day Care places to be provided across the country in 2020.

**Current Status**

Day Care centres across the country have been closed since March 2020 and as part of the focus and priority of the HSE to resume these services, a Guidance Document was prepared and circulated to HSE Operations Managers in July 2020 with the focus on opening up Day Care Centres in line within this framework.

Each Community Health Organisation (CHO) has been using this guidance and working with their organisations over the past number of weeks to commence the re-opening of Day Care Centres where possible in line with guidance with safety of both clients and staff in mind. Each Community Health Organisation Area has carried out Risk Assessments of each of their centres in line with providers to agree a plan for re-opening.

Based on these risk assessments and taking into account the public health guidance around social distancing in congregated settings and following an increase in Covid transmission in most counties, even where Day Care Centres can open, this will be very much in a limited capacity with a large decrease in numbers that will be able to attend.

Some of the issues which have been raised include:-

- Day Care Centres operated in shared public facilities where other groups are also accessing the building and the risk of infection spread.
- A number of HSE Day Care Centres are attached to HSE Residential Care Units and the clients of both the Day Care Centres and the residents from the Residential Care Unit are in the same location and use shared facilities.

- Transport of clients to the Day Care Centres where family cannot assist.
- Availability of isolation areas, should a client or a member of staff become unwell.

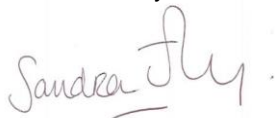
The HSE is very much aware of the importance of these Day Care Centres both for the clients themselves but also their carers. In this regard, it has been a priority to support this client base as much as possible with supports like Day Care in the Home (currently being provided in certain areas by Alzheimer's Society of Ireland (ASI). Meals on Wheels, Public Health Nursing, Chiropody Services and regular telephone contact.

However to ensure that these clients are supported as effectively as possible the following supports are being put in place alongside the plans to resume Day Care Centres to re-open as priority:-

1. Additional Home Support Packages or new Home Support Packages for most vulnerable clients.
2. Day Care in the Home – a model of Home Care in the Home is currently being finalised focused on patients with Dementia and this model is being reviewed with a view to transferring it to regular Day Care Centres also. This model will continue to develop even when Day Care Centres re-open and will be based on needs assessment and what best benefits the client and their carers.
3. Establishment of focus group to ensure Day Care Services are continued to be prioritised and to develop a plan that assist providers to have a suite of options available for the provision of Day Care depending on the Country/County Covid level at any one time.

The HSE is fully committed to supporting this vulnerable client group and sees the re-opening of Day Care Centres and additional supports where Day Care Centres cannot temporarily operate as a key priority and will use appropriate resources to ensure this client group can be supported safely while taking into account both their care needs and the needs of the carers who support them.

Yours sincerely



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**Sandra Tuohy**  
**Assistant National Director**  
**Services for Older People – Operations**