

20th October 2020

Deputy Sean Sherlock,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ Ref Number: 27081/20

“To ask the Minister for Health if an organisation (details supplied) can revert to a respite house”

Details Supplied: St Joseph's Foundation, Cooleens House and some other such facility could be found to provide for isolation, that would send a clear and positive signal to those who use the services of St. Joseph's Foundation.

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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.

Cooleens House is a registered respite centre for children. There are approximately 33 children who access this service. Prior to Covid19 pandemic, the service quantum delivered was 54-69 respite nights per month. During the onset of the Covid19 outbreak, it became necessary for services to identify isolation units in order that they could ensure the safety of residents of their services in the event of an identified case. St Josephs identified Cooleens respite centre as an isolation unit for their services accordingly.

Regrettably, due to Covid 19 crisis, respite services across Cork and Kerry were severely impacted on and resulted in some services ceasing operations completely or services being offered in an alternative way to endeavour to support clients and families presenting with the highest risk. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare along with our colleagues in Disability Services in CHO3 are working with St. Joseph's Foundation to explore alternative appropriate locations for an isolation unit and it is anticipated that respite services will recommence once an alternative isolation centre is identified.

St Joseph's Foundation is endeavoring to provide the children who access the Cooleen's Respite Service with short respite breaks in Assisi House based on priority of need and within their staffing availability. This respite service commenced in August 2020 and is being operated at a reduced capacity in line with the national social distancing guidelines as well as Infection, Prevention and Control measures. This service in Assisi House has equated to 36 nights per month of alternative respite breaks to date.

St Joseph's Foundation has also offered Home Support services to families. Prior to Covid 19, St. Joseph's Foundation delivered 497 hours of Home Support. In September 2020 this increased to 723 hours. Some families declined home support hours due to concerns expressed around the risks associated with Covid-19, other families received increased home support hours.

Disability Services is acutely aware that the reductions and cancellations of services in the context of the public health emergency has resulted in significant stressors being placed on families and individuals with disabilities across Cork Kerry Community Healthcare. St. Joseph's Foundation have advised that they will remain in contact with families regularly by phone.

I trust this clarifies the situation for you.

Yours sincerely



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