



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
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27th January 2021

Deputy Sorca Clarke,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: sorca.clarke@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Clarke,

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 44661/20

To ask the Minister for Health the number of disability services by county; the current capacity of each; and the plan to address the backlog of therapy sessions.

HSE Response

The HSE funds specialist disability services for approximately 56,000 people. This includes services provided to around 29,000 adults and children with intellectual disabilities, as well as to service users with physical, sensory or neurological disabilities, or autism. Disability services provided includes Residential, Adult Day Services, Respite, Personal Assistant and Home Support Services to children and adults with disabilities, and Early Intervention Services.

With regard to residential services, approximately 8,400 people live in residential disability services, of whom approximately 90% have intellectual disabilities. About 2,000 of these are living in congregated settings (institutions/residential campuses) where ten or more people share the accommodation or location. The remainder are largely in community group homes of typically 4-6 residents.

The latest HIQA register shows residential disability services (including residential respite) being delivered in around 1,300 registered centres, delivered by over 80 separate service providers, including the HSE (note that a residential campus may often contain a number of separate registered centres, e.g. individual houses or groups of houses/apartments on campus that share a Person in Charge).

To obtain information regarding each centre, it's location and capacity please see the following HIQA link and see section – download the register

<https://www.hiqa.ie/areas-we-work/disability-services>

With regard to day service, almost 19,000 people are in receipt of disability Day Service supports at 1,041 locations around the country. These supports are provided by 95 service provider agencies.

Respite

The HSE and its funded Agencies provide respite care to children and adults with disabilities. Respite can occur in a variety of settings for various lengths of time, depending on the needs of the individual service user, the family and according to available resources. Respite is not always centre-based and can be provided in a number of ways, e.g. Centre based; In-Home; Home-to-Home; Family Support, etc. As a vital part of the continuum of services for families, respite potentially helps prevent out-of-home full-time residential placements, preserves the family unit, and supports family stability.

The register referenced above also includes centres that provide respite facilities.

Prior to the public health emergency with regard to COVID-19 and in accordance with the National Service Plan 2020, the HSE was committed to provide 33,712 day only respite sessions and 166,183 nights (with or without day respite) to people with disabilities in 2020. In addition, the HSE will provide 144 intensive transitional support packages for children and young people with complex / high support needs, which will include planned residential respite interventions and access to planned extended day / weekend and summer day based activities.

Currently centre-based respite facilities are generally providing services at 40 to 60 per cent occupancy levels due to necessary precautions to maintain physical distancing and to adhere to infection prevention and control requirements. In a very small number of cases, certain centres remain closed or continue to be used for isolation purposes, subject to the prevailing local incidence of infection, but the HSE continue to work with providers locally to maximise both centre-based and alternative non-residential respite and support option to provide target support, wherever possible.

PA / Home Support

The HSE provides a range of assisted living services including Personal Assistant Services to support individuals to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives. PA Services are provided either through Private Providers or through a range of voluntary service providers.

Services are accessed through an application process or through referrals from public health nurses or other community based staff. Individuals' needs are evaluated against the criteria for prioritisation for the particular services and then decisions are made in relation to the allocation of resources. Resource allocation is determined by the needs of the individual, compliance with prioritisation criteria, and the level of resources available. As with every service there is not a limitless resource available for the provision of home support services and while the resources available are substantial they are finite. In this context, services are discretionary and the number of hours granted is determined by other support services already provided to the person/family.

Prior to COVID-19, the HSE was committed to protecting the level of Personal Assistant (PA) and Home Support Services available to persons with disabilities. In the 2020 National Service Plan, the HSE's priority was continue to deliver high quality PA and Home Support to approximately 10,000 people with disabilities including 1.67 million PA hours and 3.08 million Home Support hours.

The number of people in receipt of PA and Home Support services has remained steady throughout the pandemic. The number of PA hours provided up to end September 2020 (Q3) has exceeded the expected target as a result of additional PA hours being provided in lieu of other services and is on schedule to deliver NSP levels of service by year end. Home Support Services are slightly down on target to date, but not excessively so given the complexity involved in the provision of services due to COVID-19.

Support Services for Children

The HSE acknowledges the challenges in meeting the demand for children's disability services and is acutely conscious of how this impacts on children and their families

A number of service improvements are being introduced that, when implemented, will help improve access to services for children with disabilities and developmental delays. The overall programme of improvement is the ongoing roll out of Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS). This requires

the reorganisation of all current HSE and HSE funded children's disability services into geographically-based CDNTs.

The PDS Programme aims to achieve a national equitable approach in service provision for all children based on their individual need and regardless of their disability, where they live or where they go to school. Based on the recommendations of the Report of the National Reference Group on Multidisciplinary Services for Children aged 5-18 Years (2009), its objectives are:

- One clear pathway to services providing equity of access for all children with disabilities, according to their need.
- Effective teams working with partnership with parents and Education to support children in achieving their potential.
- Available resources used to the optimum benefit for children and their families.

PDS is doing this by forming partnerships between all the disability organisations in an area and pooling their staff with expertise in the different types of disabilities to form the CDNTs. These teams will provide for all children with significant disability, regardless of their diagnosis, where they live or where they go to school.

The HSE is establishing a total of 91 Children's Disability Networks across each of the nine CHOs comprised of Specialist Inter-Disciplinary Teams to work with children with complex disability needs. Each Network will have a Children's Disability Network Manager with specialist expertise in providing children's disability clinical services. The appointment of these managers will facilitate the establishment of the Children's Disability Network Teams.

Therapy provision

Therapies including Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational therapy and other therapy services are provided through Primary Care Teams in CHO Areas to children and young people requiring assessment, diagnosis and treatment and in the case of Speech and Language Therapy, for language and communication difficulties and feeding and swallowing difficulties.

Whilst accepting that significant levels of vital therapies including speech and language therapy were temporarily curtailed due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, processes have been underway in order to plan for the reintroduction of non-Covid 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, including respite provision, 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 supports, including respite 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 and in the current level of Covid restrictions; "Guidance measures for Disability Services in the context of current high levels of Covid 19 transmission rates in the community Effective from 5th January 2021.

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

Attention is also drawn to the following important web links which provide up to date information resources in respect of COVID-19: www.hspc.ie

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

Additional funding;

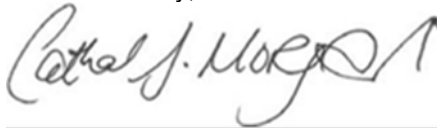
The HSE and disability service providers recognise the critical need and importance of disability supports for people and their families. This includes respite care provision. The impact of COVID-19 on people's lives has

and continues to be very significant. Our collective aim is to restore services and ensure continuity of services in a safe way and in line with the very significant investment made by the State and funded agencies.

In this context, we welcome the recent announcements from the Government of additional funding for Disability Services:

- An additional €100 million secured for Disability Services in the recent budget. The specific breakdown of this investment will be discussed as part of the normal service planning process and will be detailed in the National Service Plan. However, the HSE anticipates that significant funding will be allocated for the development of additional Services.
- €12.5 million is being made available to support the resumption of day services and enhanced home support services for disability service users.
- €20 million in one-off grants will be provided to reform disability services, build the capacity of disability organisations and to improve the quality of life of those who rely on these services.
- €7.8 million has been allocated by Sláintecare to facilitate the HSE and its funded service providers to address the overdue Assessments of Need.

Yours sincerely,



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