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9 April 2021

Deputy Cormac Devlin, TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Devlin,

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 – 14296/21

To ask the Minister for Health if the status will be reviewed of day centres for older persons and persons living with dementia (details supplied) given the majority of staff and clients have been or are about to be vaccinated; when a plan to reopen these centres will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

It has been a key priority for the HSE to ensure that the focus on resuming Day Care Services for Older People can occur as soon as it is safe to do so. It is acknowledged that the Day Care Services provided across the country are a fundamental support structure for older people. Day Care Services have been closed since March 2020. Additional supports including home support, meals on wheels, telephone support, additional public health nursing, virtual activities etc. have been provided for most vulnerable clients during this period. In addition the Alzheimer's Association of Ireland have been providing 'Day Care in the Home' across the country for clients with Dementia.

Since November 2020, a Day Care Focus Group chaired by the HSE National Older Persons Office has been in place with representation from across the HSE and voluntary organisations to put in place a plan for the re-opening of Day Care Services for Older People in line with the COVID roadmap. The Group has met on 6 occasions with the focus on putting in place guidance and plans for the resumption of Day Care Services, as soon as possible. The group was originally concentrating on what services could be delivered under current guidance and in line with the current COVID Roadmap and have now extended their approach based on the COVID vaccination programme and the impact this can provide on how services can re-open.

As a result of the vaccination programme currently being rolled out to persons over 70 years of age, further guidance has been sought from Public Health in relation to the provision of Day Care Services and how these can be operated safely and in line with the measures in place to ease restrictions over the next few months.

In addition each Day Care Service been asked to assess what can currently be delivered and requirements to re-open. A sub group has also been established to develop an individualised Risk Assessment that can be carried out in respect of clients returning to the services. It will not be feasible at present under Level 5 restrictions and current guidance in place to deliver a service in a congregated setting but plans will be put in place in conjunction

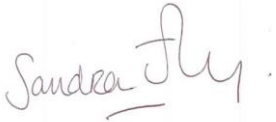
with Public Health advice by each service in relation to the resumption of services so that Day Care Services can resume as soon as it is considered safe to provide the service.

Areas to be focused on will include:-

- Safe transport
- Protection of carers who have not been vaccinated and the impact of this.
- Identification of clients who are safe to return to Day Care Services.
- Supports for clients who will not be in a position to return to Day Care Services.

The HSE will continue to focus on the re-opening of Day Care Services as a priority and the Focus Group in place will continue to drive a plan to resume these services as soon as possible. The Focus Group are due to meet again on 28th April 2021 and the HSE work will continue to work with services to ensure that as many services as possible can re-open as soon as it is safe to operate within a congregated setting.

Yours sincerely



Sandra Tuohy
Assistant National Director
Services for Older People – Operations