



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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30th June 2021

Deputy Steven Matthews,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: steven.matthews@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Matthews,

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 24150/21

To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the ongoing closure of HSE day services and respite services for those in need of round the clock care and the damaging impact it is having on their carers; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

In preparing for and responding to COVID-19 and to fully align with Public Health guidance as recommended via the NPHET, the HSE and its partner service providers put in place a range of measures. These included the prioritisation of vital residential and home support services whilst curtailing or closing certain services such as day services, as well as certain clinical supports in order to; a) prioritise essential public health services at CHO level and b) ensure continued delivery of the referenced residential and home supports provision.

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 delivery of Respite Services continued to operate during the pandemic, albeit at a reduced capacity; some centres remained open, while others were temporarily re-purposed as isolation facilities. The number of respite overnights operated at just over 50% of the NSP target for 2020; while the number of day only sessions operated at 62% of 2020 target. This was mainly due to necessary precautions to maintain physical distancing and to adhere to infection prevention and control requirements. Throughout the pandemic, staff and resources associated with closed or curtailed services were redeployed where possible to support residential provision and to provide for targeted in-home, community and tele-/online supports for service users and families based on prioritised needs.

The HSE acknowledges the impact and effects of the closure of day centres and reduction in respite provision for people 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.

While Day service locations closed in mid-March of 2020, service supports continued for day service recipients albeit in a different way. In that regard reports for June 2020 showed:-

- 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.

Reference is drawn to the following HSE weblink which continues to provide updates and guidance for disability service providers.

<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/>

Day Service locations commenced reopening in August 2020 for all recipients of day services. Due to social distancing guidance the capacity in day service locations has been reduced and therefore the quantum of service provided to people that receive day services is reduced.

There are some locations that have been retained as COVID isolation units but funding has been provided for Service Providers to source temporary locations as replacements for the duration of COVID-19. Where day service locations are being used as isolation units, day service staff are providing outreach support to the service users that would usually attend these locations.

Since 2020/2021, almost €40 million has been allocated to service providers to enable additional staff to be employed, temporary buildings to be secured, transport services to be enhanced and additional laptops/IPads to be purchased. This will fund 605 posts to enable Disability Day Services to re-open; almost 400 staff have been recruited with the remaining posts due to be filled in 2021.

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

At the end of January, 2021, the National average quantum of support in day service locations was 51% and when remote supports were included, the quantum increased to over 60%.

Currently the vaccination process for staff and service users is well underway and last month in June 2021 the HSE issued further flyers to Services Providers and Service Users. (see attached).

All Service Providers should be delivering a minimum of 60% (pre-COVID) day service location based supports to day service users who live at home with their families. Those day service users who live in residential services will be in receipt of full 24 hour x 7 supports. Their day service supports are largely being provided in their residence but some service users have returned to their day service location.

Remote day service supports continue to be provided to service users who have chosen not to attend at the location due to their own or their families COVID fears

With regard to respite services, 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.

2021 Developments

The need for increased respite facilities is acknowledged and the HSE continues to work with agencies to explore various ways of responding to this need. In accordance with the National Service Plan 2021, the HSE will provide nine additional centre-based respite services, providing some 10,400 additional respite nights along with a range of alternative respite projects including Saturday clubs, breakaway schemes, and summer schemes. In addition, the HSE will provide 214 intensive respite support packages to children and young adults.

Yours sincerely,



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