



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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Deputy Aengus O'Snodaigh,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
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Dear Deputy Ó Snodaigh,

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 28863/22

To ask the Minister for Health if any other residential facilities for people with disabilities in Ireland other than St. Joseph's Community Hospital in Stranorlar in County Donegal requested additional funding for safeguarding reasons; and if so, the way that the HSE responded to these requests.

HSE Response

The Health Service Executive (HSE) aims to provide integrated health and personal social services that meet the highest standards, where people are treated with respect and dignity and can live as independently as possible. The current adult safeguarding policy Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - Policy and Procedures (HSE, 2014) and the programme of adult safeguarding services are all part of a range of measures to support the welfare and safety of adults who may be vulnerable and at risk of abuse.

In implementing the policy, the HSE set up nine Safeguarding and Protection Teams (SPTs), one in each Community Health Organisation (CHO), to co-ordinate consistent responses to concerns of abuse and neglect. These teams are managed and led by principal social workers and staffed by social work team leaders and professionally qualified social workers. They provide a range of safeguarding functions including quality assurance as well as oversight and support to all service providers including those funded by the HSE.

Since 2015 there have been some other key advances and developments:

- Setting up of a structure of over 1,900 designated officers across the social care sector with specific lead safeguarding roles.
- Compilation and management of a national database of designated officers who have a lead role for screening and notifying cases of alleged abuse and neglect.
- Development of an inter-sectoral national safeguarding committee now known as Safeguarding Ireland.
- Development and delivery of adult safeguarding training programmes nationally which includes a basic awareness raising training programme for all and specific training for designated officers. Since 2015, there has been over 100,000 completions of safeguarding training.



- Establishment of safeguarding committees in each of the nine CHOs with the aim of supporting the development of a culture which promotes the welfare of vulnerable adults and provide support and advice to the SPTs and senior management.

There have been some key improvements in policy and procedures in relation to the protection of adults at risk in the health and social care sector including the publication of national adult safeguarding standards for all services regulated by HIQA and the Mental Health Commission (HIQA, 2019). There remains a need for ongoing reform and strengthening of policy and practice in the area of adult safeguarding. Work has also been ongoing by the Department of Health to develop an overarching national policy on adult safeguarding in the health and social care sector.

Ongoing Sláintecare reforms (Houses of Oireachtas, 2017), implementation of the HSE Patient Safety Strategy (HSE, 2019) along with improved health service structures should lead to improved service delivery models for all users of health and personal services.

Governance and Funding Arrangements with Service Providers

The HSE has established a formal and robust Governance Framework to cover funding relationships with all Non Statutory Agencies. The framework was introduced in order to implement the legislative provisions of the Health Act, 2004 and to reflect the requirements for public accountability whereby the HSE is legally obliged to account for all public expenditure on health and personal social services and to contractually underpin the grant-funding provided. All funding arrangements with non-statutory agencies are formalised by complying with this Governance Framework which has 2 different components:

- Part 1 - A Service Arrangement that is signed every 1 to 3 years by both parties and sets out the legal requirements that the agency must comply with to receive funding for the provision of services.
- Part 2 – A Set of 10 Schedules which must be completed and signed by the Agency and the HSE which sets out the detail of the service and the exact funding that the HSE is providing for the delivery of this service. This Set of Schedules also identifies the quality standards and best practice guidelines to be adhered to in the provision all services, along with process for managing complaints in relation to service provision.

The Part 2 Service Arrangement /Grant Aid agreement is completed every year for every separate service/ service arrangement with every organisation providing services funded by the HSE. The completion of same involves collaboration between the HSE and the Service Provider and involves agreement on anticipated outcomes that the service will deliver and agreed performance management requirements for the funding that the organisation is receiving from the HSE.

The Quality and Standard Codes of Practice Section within the Part 2 Service Arrangement stipulates that each organisation must cooperate with the HSE in the implementation of the National Policy for Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse which includes:

- Each organisation must ensure that all relevant staff receive, adult safeguarding awareness training. This training must include recognising and responding to concerns of abuse and neglect. All staff should be aware of the reporting line to raise concerns of abuse and neglect within their organisation.
- Organisations should ensure that there is a named Designated Officer / Co-ordination / Liaison Person who would respond and inform the HSE of concerns / allegations of abuse or neglect.
- Organisations are also required to work in partnership with the HSE Safeguarding & Protection Teams to ensure that the policy is implemented in a consistent manner across all sectors.

Within the incident management framework of the Service Arrangement, each agency's Senior Accountable Officer is required to ensure that all incidents relating to patient care and safety, staff safety, accidents and issues, concerns or allegations of abuse should be notified to the relevant Community Healthcare Area's (CHO's) Head of Service: Quality, Safety and Service Improvement.

Requests for additional funding for safeguarding reasons could vary for example, from requests for additional funding for advocacy services, staff training, communication tools, additional resources such as additional staffing, changes to the accommodation or layout of a facility, separate accommodation, emergency places, respite care and residential placements. This list is not exhaustive.

Requests for additional funding from an agency, including requests under the auspices of Safeguarding, must be submitted in terms of a Business proposal to the local Disability Services in the CHO area. The business proposal will



be assessed on its merits in the context of the situation in hand, the relevant Service Arrangement, the Service Plan, resources and priorities. This information is not collated nationally.

Service Plan 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted a broad societal requirement to safeguard vulnerable adults. In 2022 the HSE will:

- Engage with stakeholders to develop a future operating model and governance structure for safeguarding across acute and community services
- Enhance the National Safeguarding Office services with an additional suite of training and practice guidance
- Procure and introduce a national safeguarding case management system
- Continue supporting Safeguarding Ireland and other partners
- Maximise integration between adult safeguarding and protection teams and the new community support teams to have a particular focus on providing safeguarding and social work support to residents in public, private and voluntary nursing homes.

There is a requirement to extend safeguarding operations to all HSE provided and funded services. In 2022, the risk will be mitigated by the provision of a case management system and increasing the capability of all staff to recognise and respond to risk of abuse of adults in order to maximise the effectiveness of current capacity. The future of safeguarding operations will need to be considered in the context of the operating model of community healthcare networks and the design of integrated healthcare areas during 2022

Yours sincerely



Bernard O'Regan
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations