

Mr Brendan Smith T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

24th May 2024

Re: PQ ref 18680/24 - Irish Wheelchair Centre, Cavan Town

“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if additional support will be provided as a matter of urgency to an association to enable the resumption of essential services at Irish Wheelchair Association Centre in Cavan Town; and if he will make a statement on the matter.” – Brendan Smith

Details

In person Day Services provided at Irish Wheelchair Association Centre in Cavan Town have ceased due to staffing shortages; service users and their families are most anxious that these essential and important services are resumed without delay

Dear Deputy Smith,

I refer to your parliamentary question above which has been referred to me for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

I can advise that the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) provide Day Services in Cavan through a service arrangement with the HSE. The decision by IWA to reduce Day Services in Cavan by way of an interim contingency response, due to the lack of available staffing on site at its Centre, was not made in conjunction with the HSE Community Healthcare Cavan, Donegal Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo (CH CDLMS) Disability Services.

Since having being advised of the staffing issues in IWA Cavan, HSE CH CDLMS Disability Services, including its Occupational Guidance Service, have engaged with IWA Cavan Day Services to support the provider in addressing its current staffing levels.

HSE CH CDLMS Disability Services were initially made aware that there were issues with staffing levels in IWA Cavan Day Services on 19th March 2024. A series of meetings have taken place since then, attended by HSE CH CDLMS Disability Services management and IWA personnel, at which recruitment and staffing have been discussed. On the 8th April 2024, HSE CH CDLMS Disability Services were advised by IWA that, as a result of the sudden and unplanned extended leave of two staff members, the provider found itself needing to enact a contingency plan to provide a level of service, including outreach and online services, due to unsafe staffing levels within the Centre.

A number of staffing and recruitment initiatives were reviewed by IWA and HSE including the option to explore recruitment to service positions through the Community Employment (CE) scheme. IWA has advised that, currently, this option is not viable for their services in Cavan due to the requirement for adequate core staffing to provide supervision for CE scheme staff.



IWA has undertaken a recruitment campaign to fill its vacant positions and continues to advertise its vacant positions in Cavan Day Services through a number of channels including social media. IWA also agreed to consider the HSE proposal to include cross border advertising, given the proximity of Cavan to Northern Ireland.

A meeting took place on the 25th April 2024 between IWA and HSE CH CDLMS Disability Services. This meeting was attended by a number of representative from IWA and the HSE including the Cavan Monaghan Disability Services Manager, the Service Arrangement Manager for Cavan Monaghan Disability Services and the HSE Occupational Guidance Officer. The latest IWA recruitment campaign which took place on 12th April was discussed by both parties. IWA advised the HSE that five applicants were called forward for interview of which two attended. One person accepted an IWA position but later declined it. Given that the recruitment campaign had yielded no replacement staff it was agreed that the following would be explored:

1. The use of agency staff as a short term interim measure
2. Cross border recruitment campaign. This is currently being followed up by the IWA 's Human Resources Department
3. Liaise with Cavan Monaghan Education and Training board. IWA attendance at their Open Morning on 21st May 2024.
4. Rolling recruitment campaign.

A public meeting was held in the Kilmore Hotel Cavan on the 30th April, organized by IWA, and a number of local politicians and local councilors along with parents and families of IWA clients were invited to attend. The Cavan Monaghan Disability Services Manager and the Service Arrangement Manager for Cavan Monaghan Disability Services represented Cavan Monaghan Disability Services.

On the 24th May the IWA updated HSE CH CDLMS on actions which have been taken by the People and Development Directorate (IWA) addressing IWA Day Services in Cavan.

- IWA have reached out to a number of recruitment agencies, specializing in this sector, requesting expressions of interest.
- IWA to engage with their Procurement and Contracts department in line with IWA policy
- IWA Human Resources Department, utilizing social media and recruitment websites, has extended its search area to Northern Ireland. It is liaising with local People Managers to move forward with this process.

A further meeting between Cavan Monaghan Disability Services Manager and the IWA Area Manager was scheduled for 31st May 2024. The IWA Area Manager informed the Cavan Monaghan Disability Services Manager that IWA had advertised three roles, two Programme Assistants and one Programme Assistant Driver. IWA received over one hundred applications for these posts and twenty five were shortlisted for interview. Posts were offered out to candidates and the posts of Programme Assistant was accepted by two candidates, who are now in the process of being on-boarded. One person was offered the post of Programme Assistant Driver but declined the job offer. Fortnightly meetings have been arranged between IWA and the Cavan Monaghan Disability Services Manager to update on progress.



I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edel Quinn', is placed on a light grey rectangular background.

Edel Quinn
Head of Service Disability CH CDLMS
Ceann na Seirbhíse Míchumas
Eagraíocht Chúram Sláinte Limistéar CDLMS