29th Nov. 2019

Ms. Éilis Fallon,
Committee Secretariat,
Public Accounts Committee,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

Re: IWA and Cuisle holiday resort (PAC32-I-1689)

Dear Ms. Fallon,

I refer to your correspondence to Mr. Paul Reid, Chief Executive Officer, Health Service Executive following the PAC meeting of the 14th Nov. requesting further information on the announced closure of Cuisle Accessible Holiday Resort and the Irish Wheelchair Association.

Please find below for the attention of the Public Accounts Committee members response to the issues raised.

If any further information is required please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Ray Mitchell
Assistant National Director
Parliamentary Affairs Division

Encl.
Response for the Public Accounts Committee

**Briefing re ‘Irish Wheelchair Association and Cuisle holiday resort in Roscommon’ - Disability Operations**

1. **IWA Provider Organisation Information & Funding/ Service Arrangement**

   The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) was founded in 1960 by a small group of wheelchair users committed to improving the lives of people with physical disabilities in Ireland.

   The HSE funds IWA as an independent legal entity, pursuant to Section 39 of the Health Act, in order to provide a range of supports and services to people with a disability.

   IWA is a leading representative organisation and service provider for people with physical disabilities, with 20,000 members, over 2,500 employees, 57 local community centres and 2,000 volunteers. IWA also provides accessible holidays and respite breaks to enable people with physical disabilities to take a holiday with the specialist support of Irish Wheelchair Association’s staff.

   IWA’s Assisted Living Services provides personal assistants to individuals with a physical or sensory disability. The services are provided in the individuals’ homes and communities, facilitating community participation, access to education/employment and improved quality of life. The service enables users to have maximum control of their own services. IWA currently employs 1,500 Personal Assistants nationally to provide a Personal Assistance service to in excess of 1,700 Service Users.

   IWA also provides a wide range of other services that aim to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities in Ireland. These include:

   - Advocacy
   - Resource & Outreach Centres (ROCs)
   - Independent Living Apartments with support services
   - Interaction - a community inclusion/participation project
   - Motoring Advice, Assessment And Tuition
   - Parking Permits
   - Transport
   - Training & Education
   - Wheelchair Sales, Rental & Repair
   - Sport
   - Respite & Holidays
   - Housing Support
   - Information & Publications
   - Youth Services

   **a. Funding**

   IWA operates in all 9 CHO Areas and receives significant funding from the HSE under Section 39 of the Health Act 2004. Services are provided through a Service Arrangement which is signed on an annual basis and reviewed continually. The table below provides details of funding provided to Irish Wheelchair Association in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IWA Including funding from Primary Care &amp; Older Persons services</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>€37,182,552.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€39,911,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€40,081,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€41,730,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€40,486,467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is important to note the following information:

- This information is obtained from the SPG (Service Provider Governance) system.
- IWA is still in negotiation with the HSE regarding Service Arrangements and SPG may not fully reflect the full funding information / additional monies invoiced as yet this year.

2. IWA & Cuisle Accessible Holiday Resort, Donamon, Co. Roscommon
   
   a. Background
      One element of the service quantum provided by IWA includes the provision of respite holiday breaks via its commercial operation known as the Cuisle Accessible Holiday Resort, Donamon, Co. Roscommon.

      This commercially operated centre comprises a 34 bedroom, three story facility leased from the Divine Word Missionary Religious Order. The lease term operates up to 2026. HSE’s Community Healthcare Organisations have utilised the services of Cuisle on the basis of purchasing respite breaks for people with a disability. In 2018, CHOs funded a total of 1,771 bed-nights comprising 465 adults and 14 children.

      Attention is drawn to https://cuisle.com/ which provides further detail regarding this commercial entity.

   b. IWA’s decision re Cuisle & decision to transition supports from Cuisle to Commercial Hotel Arrangements
      i. Cuisle is an ageing building (built in 1950s) and requires upgrade works now and into the future. Irish Wheelchair Association does not own the Cuisle building and the lease of the building has only six years remaining.

      ii. Such is the level of repairs, the cost associated and the time required to complete the necessary procurement of works, that a significant part of the remaining time on the lease would require the building to be closed for the repair works to be completed.

      iii. The HSE has engaged with IWA in the context of Cuisle and the major capital works it has advised are necessary in order to render this commercially run centre safe and operable. In that context, it is critical to note that the IWA does not own the existing facility and the lease arrangement in place will expire in 2026. Additionally, it is the case that the existing Cuisle facility requires very significant new capital investment in order to undertake major upgrade works, estimated to be in the order of €1.5m. HSE further understands that that this is a minimum estimate of costs associated with upgrades and which does not include potential for further works that may arise owing to the current building condition, including concerns regarding the presence of asbestos.

      iv. The Board of the IWA took a decision to close Cuisle and transition the Respite break programme to Accessible Commercial Hotel Settings on 18th October 2019.

      v. HSE understands that there are approx. 48 staff working at the Cuisle Centre. The IWA acknowledges the contribution of staff at Cuisle for their contribution to our respite service in the West of Ireland. Where possible, IWA will offer redeployment opportunities to staff and we are engaging with local staff members and their representatives to ensure minimum impact.

      HSE further understands that the IWA will pay the costs of any redundancies. This process will be completed in consultation with staff and their representatives.

   c. Alternative “Commercial Hotel” Model Information
      i. IWA is transitioning its holiday service in the West of Ireland to provide accessible hotel holidays into the future, and plans to provide a wider range of choice to people with disabilities seeking to take a supported respite holiday in the West of Ireland by partnering with fully accessible hotels. This new and innovative service will commence in March 2020 in collaboration with the HSE.
ii. IWA’s new holiday service will provide people with a modern, inclusive, fully-independent hotel break in a range of locations with easy access to local towns and a wider choice of amenities. It will also enable people with disabilities to take an enjoyable holiday with friends or family in the same hotel as chosen by them from a selection of options.

iii. IWA has been operating comparable hotel holiday breaks in Kilkenny since 2018 and has received positive feedback across the board from guests. This service was also shortlisted for an Irish Healthcare Centre award in 2019.

iv. Irish Wheelchair Association has developed a range of holiday respite options for its guests, regardless of their level of support requirement, i.e., low, medium or high level support. IWA will provide support to guests on a tailored, individual basis and will ensure guests have everything they need including fully accessible en-suite bedrooms, specialised beds, aids and appliances, hoists, support with medication management and clinical tasks and Irish Wheelchair Association’s skilled personal assistance service 24/7. IWA’s fully accessible transport can be arranged and will be available to provide transport to activities and events in the community.

v. Attention is drawn to appendix 1 which provides further detail regarding this model of provision.

d. HSE position regarding Cuisle and the alternative Model

i. IWA have indicated that this level of capital funding is not available within their current resources. Equally, the HSE have confirmed to IWA that this level of capital investment is not available to HSE in the context of priorities set against our capital plan.

ii. There are a number of concerns which the HSE must have regard to in relation to this commercial operation which are noted as follows in terms of considerations regarding any possible future investment;

- There are alternative service options/ models from which to deliver this form of holiday respite breaks (i.e. from existing and accessible commercial hotel facilities);
- There is no guarantee that IWAs, or indeed the states interest- should either party elect to invest in major upgrade works - would be protected having regard to the lease term, and;
- HSE has a Capital investment programme which is aimed at prioritising core health building projects, including disability related initiatives such as Time to Move on from Congregate Settings (i.e. a programme aimed at assisting people with disabilities moving out from congregate / institutional settings). Additionally, the actual costs associated with upgrade works associated with the facility may in fact escalate

iii. Notwithstanding that the IWA is an independent legal entity entitled to reach its own decisions; the HSE will continue to maintain its liaison with IWA Senior Management over the coming weeks and as matters progress. HSE also confirms that the existing funding envelope aligned to the Cuisle Accessible Holiday Resort will continue to be made available in order to ensure continuance of invaluable form of respite support.

November 2019
Health Service Executive
Hotel Respite Breaks:  How do they work?

Firstly, contact the relevant Irish Wheelchair Association Respite Manager to book your hotel respite break.

Next, we’ll confirm all of your individual requirements and tailor a hotel respite break for you or your group. We’ll make sure you have everything you need including fully accessible ensuite bedrooms, specialised beds, aids & appliances, hoists, support with medication management & clinical tasks and Irish Wheelchair Association’s personal assistance 24/7.

We’ll book you into one of our approved hotels, with highest standards of wheelchair accessibility, a warm atmosphere and peace of mind that you or your loved one are in a safe and caring environment.

Don’t worry, on check-in, Irish Wheelchair Association’s specialised personal assistance staff will meet you and be available for you 24 hours a day.

Once you are settled in, Irish Wheelchair Association’s fully accessible transport can be arranged in consultation with you and take you wherever you need to go, from fun outings to shopping.

Irish Wheelchair Association will be there for you for your entire stay, ensuring that you have a wonderful holiday in a fully accessible location.

Here’s what Irish Wheelchair Association’s existing hotel respite guests say...

“Staff excellent, food excellent; feel equal going on holidays with everyone else.”

“I no longer feel like people with disabilities are put in a box.”

“It’s all excellent. You give us a great holiday not just respite.”

For more information contact holidays@iwa.ie