



Saint John of God Community Services clg

Chief Executive's Office

30th September 2020

Dear Service User, Family Members and Supporters,

I am writing to update you in respect of the ongoing funding crisis we face at Saint John of God Community Services and the challenges facing the organisation.

We have repeatedly tried to engage with the HSE to resolve the crisis and wrote to the HSE at that time to advise that if the accumulated deficit and current funding requirement were not addressed, we might be left with no option but to transfer responsibility for service provision to the HSE. We have had various unsuccessful contacts with the HSE over the intervening period on this matter but as you will recall the issue was overtaken by the national crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

With the gradual easing of restrictions over the summer months, we returned to this issue with the HSE, but again, unfortunately we made no progress. We even wrote to all the Party Leaders during the government formation process to highlight this crisis specifically and to advocate for Disability, Mental Health and Services for Older People in the negotiations and as a new Programme for Government was being considered.

In recent weeks we wrote again to the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste and the Green Party Leader as well as to the Minister and Ministers of State at the Department of Health, Public Expenditure and Finance to alert them to the seriousness of the current situation and the fact that the Board would be meeting in late September to consider formally notifying the HSE of its intention to serve a Notice of Termination, in the absence of a firm and unequivocal commitment to immediately address our financial crisis. At the end of August 2020, we have an accumulated deficit of € 37.7m and but for the Orders contribution of €16m over recent years to subsidise the services, our deficit would be almost €54m.

I deeply regret having to inform you that the HSE and the Government has failed to respond to our many appeals to address our financial crisis. Consequently, the Board was left with no alternative but to instruct me to issue to the HSE today, 12 months' notice of the termination of our contract. This notice will result in the transfer of all of our services to the HSE, or to a provider identified by the HSE over the coming 12 months.

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Saint John of God Community Services clg is a company limited by guarantee.

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This is a seismic step that we have taken with the heaviest of hearts, as it goes against what we want to do and have tried to do for almost a century. We are regrettably left with no other option. We simply can no longer continue with this intolerable situation that has despite the best endeavours of staff so frequently compromised the services and supports we provide to people.

I accept that notwithstanding our efforts to keep the people we support, their families and guardians fully informed throughout this process, that today's news will still come as a great shock to many of you and understandably cause distress.

I would like to provide the following assurances to you as we enter this period of transition. We will do everything in our power to manage the smooth transfer of service over the next 12-month period. Our priority will be to ensure the least possible disruption to the people we support. We will also keep you fully informed of developments over this period.

We have sought an urgent meeting with the HSE in relation to the transitioning of services. Our desire and intention is that there will be no immediate changes in respect of the services as they are currently provided but it must be understood that this is entirely dependent on the HSE providing sufficient funding over the 12 month period. We will also discuss with the HSE the implications for our staff. I expect that the employment of staff will be protected, and in line with Transfer of Undertakings legislation will transfer to the HSE, or to an another provider identified by the HSE.

I am sure that you will have many questions and concerns in relation to this news today and I encourage you to get in touch locally with your clinical team, key worker, local center manager or the Regional Director Shane Hill on 01 2955 888. Alternatively you can contact me by email- clare.dempsey@sjog.ie or by telephone on 01 5333395. I may not be able to respond immediately, but I will look at all emails and I will also keep you regularly updated on the process.

There is no easy way to conclude a letter of such significance for our service except to say that this is a letter that I had dearly hoped never to have to write.

May I wish you and your loved ones good health particularly in the weeks and months ahead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare Dempsey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Clare Dempsey
Chief Executive