



September 2020

Head of Windmills report.

Commenced 2020 in a good place, optimistic about the future.

- Pobal replacement monies had been added to Service Arrangement.
- 1 % cut to services was being discussed but we were prepared too absorb that.
- Gearing up to begin the fight for pensions and incremental funding.
- Management Team structure in place, and team roles developing
- Move to Comarket had caused a lot of upheaval and required careful management in order to minimise stress levels for the guys and staff. The move had been successful achieved, and the guys were well settled in.
- We were looking at reigniting our efforts to extend the person-centred approach in Larkins Lane.
- Windmill was at capacity with 50 service users, using both locations. Possible two school leaver referrals from Lady of Fatima, none from St Patricks.
- Compliment of staff 2020 pre Covid was 33 staff. This included a new Administration role, funded through Windmill charge for Management of an individuals personalized budget. We had just recruited two person's to extend the Independent Living Supports team and we were hoping to develop the Independent Living Supports Project further.
- There were rumblings of Covid 19 or Corona virus, and we were watching other countries.
- Early March got from HSE a template to complete a contingency plan, looking at priority needs, from P1 to P3 in the event of closure of Day Service for three weeks.
- 18 March, Day Services Nationally directed to close by HSE.
- Staff divided into teams, led and co-ordinated by management team members. Key people taking the role of facilitating communication between those who access the service, their families and Windmill.
- Windmill continued to Provide very individualized face to face supports, at a reduced level, to those on the contingency plan, and those who accepted the face to face supports.
- To all others we provided Remote supports: telephone calls, zoom calls, developed a face book page group providing a daily, limited, programme and interaction with Windmill.
- In these early stages staff, where the need was identified, provided some once off face to face supports, whilst being very careful to adhere to the public health recommendations.
- « This began the restructuring of how staff performed their roles. It Involved the beginnings of remote reporting and communication with Windmill.
- Most of the communication between Windmill and Families occurred between Key working staff and the families. One of the most important issues being to be alert to changing or

increasing needs.

- Three weeks came and went, Day services remained closed and the Country progressed onto lockdown.
- « People’s needs increased and many moved up in priority based on the criteria set out in contingency plan. Windmill worked to respond to changing and increasing needs. In order to ensure that we remained compliant with Public Health recommendations and the huge volume of documentation coming down from HSE. We risk assessed every move we made.
- Health and Quality and Management team, met regularly, weekly or more, remotely and or in person as appropriate and in accordance with Public Health recommendations. Our focus was on responding to needs and continuing to delivering supports in a safe manner. This involved staying up to date and adapting to the ever changing Covid 19 recommendations and requirements and considering in detail each support against these controls and recommendations. This was a period of major adaptation and learning for the management team, and resulted in updating safety statement to include the following Policies:

1 Transport Policy

2 Infection control and symptom monitoring policy

3 transportation policy updated to include Covid 19 appendix

4 Protocol in the event of suspected or actual case of Covid 19

5 IT privacy and confidentiality policy

These policies have been updated several times over the period in response to the changing and developing situation. These policies involved much change and in cooperation with the Board, the management team, made several adaptations to the physical spaces, and vehicles, developed new practices and procedures in the use of new sanitizing equipment and materials.

- Windmill continued to respond to the identified and requested needs. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 related constraint, in a very small number of cases we could not provide the level of service that was requested, but for the most part we did. Whilst under the direction of the Board to move very safely and cautiously, we manage to offer face to face supports to the majority of those who requested and needed it. We received some very positive feedback from families with very little negative.

In June we returned to HSE a template outlining the level of supports being provided. Windmill was at that time providing being between 5 to 15 hours of support to the majority of people. Some of those who had been assessed as being of a higher priority need and who requested the supports were receiving a higher level of supports. It was clear at that time that it would be impossible to return to the pre Covid level or model of service provision in the new Covid restricted world.

- Windmill requested of families that they continue to pay service charge, minus the transportation charge. Families for the most part continued the service charge, many expressing their understanding and appreciation that we continued to work. Where it was necessary due to hardship Windmill made accommodation.

- Reopening of Services Nationally

In June HSE forwarded to Day Service instruction to reopen Day Services in September and to communicate with families detailing their plans to do so, in August. HSE also sent to Day services information to be forwarded to the individuals who access Service and families, saying that Day services would reopen in Sept, and suggesting that there would be changes in how the service would operate. This I fear did cause some confusion amongst our group of families as Windmill had continued to deliver a level of service. We received feedback that some thought that the communication meant that Windmill was going to return to pre-Covid level of service.

Windmill in an effort to provide clarity sent a letter explaining the situation to families / carers.

In July Day services received from HSE "Guidance to Support the Framework for the Resumption of Adult Disability Day Services", document. On reading it we were happy that we had implemented the majority of that guidance points and controls. Those we hadn't implemented we hadn't been in a position to operate at that time eg MOU between services and transportation controls.

- Annual leave

This year due to the fact that most people had been without face to face service for a period of time, and they were now in receipt of a reduced level of supports, Windmill decided to remain open throughout the Summer period, i.e. not close for the usual two week period. During that time, we maintained the level of supports which had been developed at that time.

In early August HSE required that each Day Service Nationally provide to them the date of reopening of service, this to be added to a National Portal for access by families nationally. In August when the portal was viewed, Windmill and possible one other service in the south east region, were the only day service reported as being open.

- Restructuring of Service.

In recent weeks we have been planning and working towards gradually extending level of service to that of half pre-Covid level of service for each person. This involves a total restructuring of service and change to the supports already being provided.

An example of a Covid control that demands that we restructure is the need to ensure physical space in premises to provide for Social distancing of two meters. This requirement limits the number of people we can have in one space at any one time and this in turn greatly reduces our capacity to bring people into location in Wexford,

Restructuring requires that we open new locations, on a temporary or more permanent basis. Having spoken with Maria about this need she contacted FR James Murphy in Rosslare. We are now providing supports to a small number of people in the Priory in Rosslare. We are also looking around for other locations. Costing may be an issue to which I will likely return.

Feeling that this restructuring and the changes involved required further explanation and to avert any anxiety Windmill forwarded to families a letter of explanation.

- Service users and School leavers.

In planning restructuring service we must consider school leavers and referrals.

At the beginning of the year we were at full complement 50. Currently due to Covid 19 reduction in service levels, and the decision of two / three individuals, to reduce their dependence on windmill supports, a decision based on their developed independence, we are in a position to now offer sampling position to two school leavers.

HSE have allocated the funds for these individuals to access Windmill. We have stressed that we are commencing on a sampling process, with no guarantee of a place with a place being offered only where it has been determined that we can meet needs. Windmill has also stressed that we can provide support only in line with those who currently access the service, in other words not a full-time service. Windmill does not require payment of service Charge during sampling period

- Staffing issues.

As we outline above the Covid 19 Crisis has required a total restructuring of how we do our work.

Examples of the changes that demanded a huge learning curve from staff are as follows.

PPE use and prevention of transfer of Virus training.

Remote working and reporting responsibilities.

Increased outreach responsibilities.

Increased lone working responsibilities.

- Increased Risk assessing responsibilities.

Increased assessment of need responsibilities.

Adapting and ensuring the observance of Covid 19 recommendations and controls, while continuing to provide supports in a sensitive manner.

Developing and maintain relationships with families and being the main conduit of information flow between Windmill and families.

Increased sanitizing and cleaning duties.

- Adapting to Covid 19 change in work practices such as use of PPE. Symptom monitoring, providing training and support to those we support to become "Covid compliant".

Reductions in staff.

At the beginning of the Covid Crisis when Day Services closed, we lost one longer serving staff member and two of the newly recruited staff working on the ILS team.

One long serving member of management team, had reached retirement age and had elected to remain with us on a three day basis. Covid 19 required that he go into a cocooning situation, he has now decided to reduce to 5 hours remote working, supporting an individual. He intends to fully retire from Windmill end of year.

- A long serving bus driver and maintenance person, was also in a cocooning situation, he had just come out of cocooning and was in a terrible car accident. He may return when able on a reduced basis in the future. Windmill has recruited a new bus driver who is now working his probation period.

Cleaning staff

With Covid 19 came increased cleaning and sanitizing duties. Staff have adopted the process of sanitizing and wiping down all used and high touch surfaces / spaces. However, it is necessary, we feel to have dedicated cleaning staff to ensure thoroughness. Also, Windmill has now an increased number of service locations to maintain.

A former Bus Escort now functions as a Cleaner in Cornmarket. Last Friday we interviewed people to take on a cleaning role to provide cover for existing staff and to fill a vacancy.

Relief Panel

In order to facilitate annual leave whilst maintaining the level of supports we formed a relief panel. The panel consisted of third year students who had completed their placement with us. We recruited them on a fixed term fixed purpose contract. Two of those individuals have become valued members of the IPL team and are now working with us on a part time basis.

Others continue to function on the relief panel on a paid as worked basis. We anticipate that a relief panel will play a vital part in our continuing capacity to provide supports over the Winter months.

Part of our new procedures is the requirement for staff to self-symptom monitor. If they present with any Covid associated symptoms stay away from face to face contact and refer to their GP for Covid testing. Over the winter months we anticipate that this will result in us requiring a high level of cover.

This raises another issue: it is important that we send the message to staff that they must stay away from face to face supports if symptomatic. In order to be sure that staff are motivated to take this measure they need to be assured that they will not be penalized if and when they do report symptoms and must stay

away from providing supports. This will have a financial cost to Windmill and which is difficult to predict. Also, if we cannot provide the cover it may prove necessary to suspend supports until such time that we have adequate cover to ensure safety.

Financial Cost to Windmill:

As highlighted above Covid 19 has required that we restructure the whole of Windmill. Provision of supports in this environment involves greater costs.

Total expenditure has to date comes to between 18 to 20 thousand. We have forwarded cost to HSE in the hope of recouping these costs.

Some of the costs include

- Adapting locations and vehicles.
- Reduced capacity of vehicles increased routed and transportation costs.
- Increased staffing ratio
Smaller groups requiring additional trainers. Increased hours and expenditure for external trainers, as yet unquantified.
- Cover for Covid related and other leave.
- Ongoing additions cleaning and sanitizing costs
Purchasing sanitizing equipment.
- IT equipment and remote reporting it equipment.

Fundraising

We want to acknowledge Zurich Wexford and ZZurich, who raised 25 thousand euro for Windmill. This fundraising has allowed us to respond as was necessary and in a timely pre-emptive manner.

Ongoing concerns / issues/

- Provision of and maintenance of level Service in Covid 19 environment whilst ensuring the safety of all.

Staff pension — quote from a staff member “Unless a pension comes through from work will have to find it elsewhere. I love working for Windmill but I am feeling immense financial pressure. Great to hear that directors appreciate the good work but that does not pay the bills. The work is getting harder, stretch to support people now with Covid 19, it is becoming harder, more challenging but this is not being recognised financially. An increment is not going to make that much a difference to me, I need to have a pension”

Thanks!

I want to formally acknowledge and thank, the staff team who have risen to the challenge of providing Supports whilst adapting to the added pressures brought about by Covid 19. They have and are continuing to adapt and respond to the changing work environment, and the new challenges presented to them daily.

Also I want to acknowledge and thank, the management team. Linda, Siobhan, Clare, Liz and vlvester. They have each played a crucial role in guiding and supporting the staff team, developing policy, planning and risk assessing supports, planning and implementation of the restructuring of service.

This they have done in an effective manner and Windmill would not have being in a position to continue supports if the management team had not been put in place.

Finally, I want to thank you the Board of Windmill.

Maria is always available. Whether in person or on the other end of the phone, to me and to Linda, and we do regularly communicate.

If in doubt or need guidance or direction I know, because I have received it, quick and skilled response, support, guidance direction and reassurance from the Board, the individual members.

Thank you for your support and guidance and careful direction.

Windmill is lucky in having had a wonderful bunch of people serving on its Board.