Minister Frank Feighan announces funding of €480,000 to support the restoration of drug and alcohol services during COVID-19

From Department of Health

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The Minister of State with responsibility for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, Frank Feighan TD, today announced the provision of €480,000 in once-off funding to support the restoration of drug and alcohol services during COVID-19.

The €480,000 will be made available to the network of 24 Drug and Alcohol Task Forces for distribution to community and voluntary drug and alcohol services in their areas. Each task force will receive up to €20,000 in once-off funding to meet COVID-19 related costs.

Making the announcement, Minister Feighan said:

"A key priority for Government during COVID-19 is to protect, safeguard and support health, social care and other essential services. The safe resumption of community-based drug and alcohol services is a key component of this approach and as a result this has been a major aspect of my department’s work since the arrival of this pandemic to our shores. As Minister with responsibility for this area, I want to state that we fully recognise the vital role being played by drug and alcohol services across the country in reducing the harms of substance use and supporting rehabilitation and recovery.

"I also acknowledge the real and ongoing difficulties faced by drug and alcohol services in light of COVID-19, which has led to many new additional costs. From speaking directly with representatives of our drug and alcohol services since July, it is clear that the challenges they face are immense. As a result, I am pleased to announce today that my department is providing this new funding in order to support the restoration of these vital drug and alcohol services during COVID-19."

Under the scheme, task forces can apply to the HSE for up to €20,000 to cover the costs associated with the restoration of drug and alcohol services within their area including (a) development of ICT facilities (b) changes in layout of offices (c) additional training for staff (d) PPE and safety equipment (e) reconfiguration of services and other categories.

The funding is part of the Department of Health’s Framework for the Restoration of Drug and Alcohol Services, which it has developed in consultation with stakeholders.
Minister Feighan added:

"It is important that drug and alcohol services are restored in a planned and appropriate manner in line with public health advice. I want to thank the working group of stakeholders for their contributions in developing the Framework for the Restoration of Drug and Alcohol services. I am aware that services have already adapted the COVID-19 return to work safety protocols and latest public health and safety advice. It is very important that staff and service users are protected from the ongoing threat of COVID-19."

ENDS

Notes

The restructuring of services, social distancing measures and self-isolation can be particularly difficult for those who are trying to remain drug or alcohol free and for those who are in recovery.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to retaining the specific actions taken to support increased and improved access to addiction services during COVID-19.

Drug and alcohol services had to adapt new ways of working to continue to support people affected by substance misuse during the current pandemic. This funding will assist them to continue to provide these important services during this difficult time and ultimately help them to restore services fully in due course.

The funding can cover the following costs associated with the restoration of drug and alcohol services:

- development of ICT facilities
- changes in layout of offices
- additional training for staff
- safety equipment
- reconfiguration of services
- support for service users (phone credit etc)
- safe operation of drug and alcohol support groups and addiction programmes
- exceptional costs in meeting client needs

Further information on the closing dates for the application process is available from the HSE.