



Guidelines for COVID-19 for young adults in receipt of an aftercare service

Ref: CMT-AD-28-2020

Version. 4.0

Date: 07/04/2020
Updated: 29/09/2020

Please note this document has been updated to reflect an extension to the timeframe for special measures to continue in relation to the aftercare allowance. The special measures have now been extended until the 31st January 2021. This provision can be used when it is assessed by the aftercare worker/manager that it is required to financially support the young adult. This measure is to ensure that young adults are not adversely affected by the impact of the public health measures.

Introduction

In response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, Tusla has introduced specific measures in relation to the provision of aftercare services to all young adults in aftercare, and those turning 18 years during the period of the public health crisis. The purpose of this guideline document is to provide maximum support to young adults in aftercare during this difficult time.

It also provides aftercare staff and social workers with information to support the continuing delivery of the aftercare service in this context.

New measures have been introduced acknowledging that young persons turning 18 years of age during the public health crisis, and those who are currently in aftercare services, may experience particular challenges. It is intended that these new measures will support young adults to ensure that they are not disadvantaged during the current pandemic.

Tusla is working closely with its HSE colleagues to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The HSE provides regular updates on its website with up to date information on the evolving situation with regard to the pandemic. As additional information becomes available, these guidelines will be updated, as required.

Legislation/ National Policy

Health Act 1947

National Aftercare Policy 2017.

Incident Management Policy, 2016 (if young adults are in receipt of an aftercare service this policy should be implemented).

Child Care Amendment Act 2015

COVID-19 Risk Assessment for Home Visits for Children at risk of Serious Harm, e.g., already recorded on the Child Protection Notification System (CPNS) and through urgent intake referrals

Useful Documents

Telephone Support is available for clients in Housing Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A guidance document from the Irish Housing First Platform, 27th March 2020.

Purpose of the Guidance

Please be advised that this guidance may be further updated.

The following guidelines apply to young adults who are:

- Turning 18 years of age during the public health crisis
- Currently engaged with aftercare services.
- Refusing to seek appropriate medical advice or to adhere to guidelines
- Confirmed as having COVID-19 and have been medically advised to self-isolate.
- Symptomatic of COVID-19.

It is important to remind young adults in our aftercare services that under no circumstances should anyone travel to a GP's surgery or, to a hospital emergency department unless medically advised to do so.

Interim measures for those in aftercare or turning 18 years of age during the public health crisis

Aftercare allowance;

The aftercare allowance will continue to be administered to care leavers who are currently in receipt of the allowance and to those who become eligible during this period. This includes all young adults who are currently engaged in education or accredited training. The aftercare allowance will be administered for those who are eligible and turning 18 years of age during this public health crisis.

If the allowance was due to end during the period of the public health crisis measures, or, by reaching the age of 21 or 23 years of age, as it applies to the young person, this shall be extended until January 31st 2021, where it is assessed that it is needed to support the young adult financially.

Education or training disruption

Young adults who are engaged in education or accredited training will be supported to continue to engage in this activity, through the various methods employed by colleges and training services.

If for any reason a young adult cannot engage in these provisions, they will not be adversely affected in any way in re-engaging with their studies or training at a later date. All such cases will be considered in the context of exceptional circumstances when this public health crisis ends.

Leaving care

All young people who reach the age of majority (18 years old) during the public health crisis will be supported to remain in their placement until the 31st January 2021. This includes young people/ young adults seeking international protection.

This means that when a foster carer agrees to continue to provide a placement for the young adult, the fostering allowance will continue to be administered to the carer, irrespective of whether or not the young adult is in education or accredited training. This will be paid at the fostering rate and will continue until the 30th August 2020.

For those who remain in placement and who are in education or accredited training, these payments will be processed as an aftercare payment using the CA005 form. The additional €52 will be processed on the additional financial support form - CA0008, and will be noted as a COVID-19 payment.

For those who remain in placement and who are not in education or accredited training, these payments will be processed on the additional financial support form - CA0008 and noted as a COVID-19 payment.

All COVID-19 additional financial support payments must be tracked locally.

If a young adult remains in a residential placement after reaching 18 years of age, they will be supported and provided for in this placement. This will continue until the 31st January 2021. Statements of purpose and function for children's residential care centres where this applies will be temporarily amended to reflect this decision.

This is subject to the full co-operation of the young person and in the case of those in foster care, by agreement with their foster carers. This measure does not preclude transitions to aftercare placements where individual young people wish to continue with their planned moves at this time.

Special care

Children reaching 18 years of age in special care during the current measures will be responded to, by ensuring that appropriate step down planning remains a priority for them. Maximum support will be afforded to them by both the special care unit and

their aftercare placement, recognising their specific legal status and that of the designated special care centre.

Guidelines for managing the refusal to follow or seek medical advice in aftercare

Residential care/ remained living with their carers.

If a young adult who is 18 years of age and over is refusing to seek or adhere to medical advice (including self-isolation), and staff or carers caring for or working with them believe that they are presenting with symptoms of COVID-19, the staff or carers must immediately advise the relevant aftercare worker.

The aftercare worker will be requested to make contact with the young adult to provide support and encourage them to consent to testing for COVID-19. Every reasonable effort should be made by those caring for the young adult to encourage them to seek and follow medical advice.

In the event of the young adult refusing to seek COVID-19 testing, self-isolation or any other medical advice, they shall be informed by the aftercare worker that this is a public health matter and that it must be formally notified to the HSE. This notification will be communicated by the area manager to the chief officer presiding over the relevant Community Health Organisation, and depending on public health advice, potentially referred to a member of An Garda Síochána. The aftercare worker must ensure that he or she explains the potential consequences of this action to the young adult. These incidents must be reported on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and recorded on the National Incident Report form, under Section L: Dangerous Occurrence.

The aftercare worker must bring the young person's refusal to the attention of his or her line manager who must in turn escalate the matter to the area manager.

A decision to notify the HSE and potentially An Garda Síochána about a young adult should be made if it is deemed essential and in the best interests of public health. Such decisions will require the agreement with and approval of the area manager.

Advice can also be sought from a GP to guide this decision making process.

This should be recorded on the aftercare case record for the young person concerned.

Following a notification to the HSE and potentially An Garda Síochána, the aftercare worker must inform the young adult that the authorities with specified powers have been formally notified.

Staff or carers who are tasked with caring for the young adult in question will keep the aftercare worker fully updated on the young person's health, social and physical circumstances.

Where the authorities indicate that they will not be taking any actions, then the aftercare worker must ensure that the young adult is fully informed of the decision. The decision must also be communicated to staff and carers who care for the young adult.

The aftercare worker must also notify his or her line manager of this response, who in turn, must escalate the matter to the appropriate identified Tusla manager for further consideration, including legal advice.

Procedure where a young person has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus

In the case where any young adult is sharing the accommodation with others and has tested positive for the virus, or, has been advised to self-isolate, then the management of the accommodation, including staff and or carers, should follow the advice as set out on hse.ie and make the appropriate decisions.

The staff and/or carers tasked with caring for the young person will keep the aftercare worker fully updated on the young adult's health, social and physical circumstances.

In **all cases** for those living in residential care or for those who remain living with carers, where a young adult is confirmed to have COVID-19 and Tusla is aware of the positive diagnosis, this must be notified on NIMS, using the National Incident Management Form, under Section K: Bio Hazards.

Independent Living

Community Assistance Scheme (CAS): Accommodation for Care Leavers

If aftercare workers have concerns in relation to young adults living in Approved Housing Body (AHB) accommodation, they must advise the relevant landlord(s) to make contact with them. Aftercare workers must also provide the AHB landlord(s) of any revised aftercare service drop-in contact phone number. Contact details for the National liaison lead for aftercare can also be provided.

Aftercare managers can also contact the National liaison lead for aftercare with any additional queries.

For young adults who are self-isolating and have no support network, the aftercare worker should work with the aftercare manager to ensure that arrangements have been put in place for the young adult to have access to food, and medical supplies, as required. The National liaison lead for aftercare can support with making such arrangements if an issue arises with regard to staffing in the area.

Private Accommodation

For young adults living in private accommodation that have COVID-19 related health concerns and who are in contact with their aftercare service, their aftercare worker must advise them on any appropriate steps to take to attend to their health. The information shared must be in line with the expert public health advice in respect of COVID-19 available at hse.ie

It is important to remind young adults in our aftercare services that under no circumstances should anyone travel to a GP's surgery or a hospital emergency department, unless expressly advised to do so by a medical practitioner.

For young adults that are self-isolating and have no support network, the aftercare worker should work with the aftercare manager to ensure that arrangements are in place for the young adult to have access to food, and medical supplies as required. The National liaison lead for aftercare can support with making such arrangements if there is an issue with staffing in the area.

Procedure for refusal to follow or seek medical advice- CAS/ Private Accommodation

In the event that a young adult refuses to seek and comply with COVID-19 testing, self-isolation or any other medical advice, then the aftercare worker must inform them that this is a public health matter and notifiable to the HSE. The aftercare worker must ensure they explain the potential consequences of this action clearly to the young adult.

The aftercare worker must bring this to the attention of their line manager who must in turn escalate this matter to the area manager.

A decision to notify the HSE and potentially An Garda Síochána about a refusing young adult should be made, if it deemed essential and in the best interests of public health. These decisions will require the agreement and approval of the relevant area manager.

Advice from a GP may also be sought to inform this notification decision.

This should then be recorded on the aftercare case record for the young person.

Following notification, the aftercare worker must inform the young adult that they have formally notified the authorities who have legal powers.

Complex Cases

If following a risk assessment, it is determined that a vulnerable young adult requires a home visit as a matter of urgency due to exceptional circumstances, then the steps taken and any decisions required should be as in accordance with the COVID-19 Risk Assessment for Home Visits for Children at risk of Serious Harm (e.g., known on the CPNS and Urgent Intake Referrals).