



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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23rd December 2019

Deputy Niamh Smyth
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House, Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: niamh.smyth@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Smyth,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary question, which was submitted to this department for response.

PQ 52184/19

To ask the Minister for Health if matters raised by an organisation (details supplied) in relation to the provision of care for its users will be reviewed; if the concerns will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Details supplied; Down Syndrome Ireland. Correspondence from Down Syndrome Ireland

HSE Response

In the health service over the past decades there have been major changes in how services are delivered. Current services are based on the principle of mainstreaming with a clear focus on ensuring persons with a disability have access to the normal range of services and participate in community life as far as possible. The National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay ensures that children are directed to the appropriate service based on the complexity of their presenting needs rather than based on diagnosis. Many children and adults with a disability who have support needs can be effectively supported within mainstream child and adult health services. Most children with developmental delay including Down's syndrome will access therapy services via Primary Care. A proportion, representing those with assessed need for specialist services are referred to disability services.

Waiting Lists for Therapeutic Interventions

The HSE is aware of the numbers of children and adults waiting for therapy services and is fully cognisant of the stress this can cause to families. One of the key priorities for the HSE is to improve waiting times for therapy services by implementing a revised model of care for children's Speech and Language Therapy services and Psychology services and develop new models for Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy services.

In addition to the significant numbers of additional posts allocated to Primary Care and to Social Care under the Progressing Children's Disabilities Programme in recent years (see further details below), the HSE is committed to using innovative approaches, involving public, voluntary and private providers, to achieving a targeted reduction in therapy waiting lists.

The HSE is fully committed to working in partnership with service providers to achieve maximum benefits for children with complex needs, and aims to ensure that resources available are used in the most effective manner possible.

Down Syndrome Ireland.

One of the many organisations providing services on behalf of the HSE is Down Syndrome Ireland. This organisation has over 3,000 members and 26 branches nationwide and provides a range of services, including: Early Intervention and Development Programmes; Mother & Child Groups; Therapy Services; Employment Opportunities; Counselling and Adult Advocacy Services.

Funding

The HSE recognises the value of Down Syndrome Ireland's services to people with Down Syndrome and provides funding to Down Syndrome Ireland under Section 39 of the Health Act, 2004. The bulk of this funding is provided through CHO Area 7. In 2019, Down Syndrome Ireland is scheduled to receive funding of €106,396. Funding has also been given to Down Syndrome Ireland through the HSE National Lottery Grant scheme and this organisation also raises additional finance through fundraising activities.

Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS)

The HSE is rolling out the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS) Programme, which requires a reconfiguration of all current HSE and HSE funded children's disability services into geographically-based Children's Disability Network Teams (Early-Intervention and School-aged or 0-18 Teams). This Programme aims to achieve a national equitable approach in service provision for all children based on their individual need and regardless of their disability, where they live or where they go to school. Based on the recommendations of the Report of the National Reference Group on Multidisciplinary Services for Children aged 5-18 Years (2009), its objectives are:

- ✓ One clear pathway to services providing equity of access for all children with disabilities, according to their need.
- ✓ Effective teams working with partnership with parents and Education to support children in achieving their potential.
- ✓ Available resources used to the optimum benefit for children and their families.

PDS is achieving this by forming partnerships between all the disability organisations in an area. The staff resources are then pooled according to expertise in the different types of disabilities to form local Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs). The CDNTs will then provide for all children with significant disability, regardless of presenting needs.

In tandem with Health service reform which seeks to have Health and Social Care "Networks" in place, HSE is well underway in terms of establishing a total of 96 Children's Disability Networks across each of the nine CHOs. A key enabler to establishment of the remaining Children's Disability Network Teams is the recruitment of the Children's Disability Network Managers. The establishment of these Networks was held up due to engagements with Forsa T/U in a conciliation process under the auspices of the WRC during March and April. The Labour Court recommended on 30th October that the HSE proposals regarding an interdisciplinary model for the delivery of services to children with disabilities should be accepted and that overall implementation of these arrangements should proceed. This is a critically important recommendation that underpins essential reform of Children's Disability Services under the Progressing Disability Services Policy. Subject to the approval of derogations by the Head of Community Operations, the appointment of these Network Managers can now proceed following the recent Labour Court ruling and it is anticipated that the appointments of CDNMs will be progressed in Q1 2020.

It is intended that Children's Network Disability Services will be outcomes focussed, which is an approach setting out services to support children and young people to achieve outcomes. In addition, while recognising the lived experience of families, disability services should also aim to support families to achieve certain outcomes.

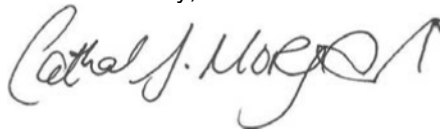
Please note that all HSE Areas planning reconfiguration continue to have significant Early Intervention and School Age Services in place, provided either directly by the HSE, or by voluntary service providers funded by the HSE, such as Enable Ireland, Kare, Muriosa Foundation, St. John of God Services, Brothers of Charity Services, St. Michael's House, Cope Foundation, CRC, Daughters of Charity Services etc.

Additional funding for Therapeutic services across both Disability and Primary Care

NSP 2019 has provided for an additional 100 new therapy posts to be implemented over 2019/ 2020 to the Children's Disability networks. This is additional to existing resources in this area as follows:

- The above should be considered in light of previous investment secured by the HSE for therapeutic services which has been invested in the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (0-18s) Programme (PDS). Since 2014, the roll out of the PDS has entailed targeted investment of €14m and the provision of 275 additional therapy staff, to increase services for children with all disabilities.
- In 2013, additional funding of €20m was provided to strengthen primary care services. This comprised over €18.5m for the recruitment of over 260 primary care team posts and over €1.4m to support community intervention team development.
- There was also a €4m allocation within the 2016 Service Plan to facilitate the recruitment of Speech and Language Therapists to address waiting lists as part of the overall Speech and Language Therapy waiting list initiative within Primary Care and Social Care. The allocation provides for an additional 83 posts.
- In addition, the recruitment of a further 40 posts in Occupational Therapy (OT) commenced in Quarter 4, 2018. Currently the OT Service Improvement Working Group is reviewing options pertaining to the allocation of posts across CHO Areas. This is being done in conjunction with the findings of the OT Service Improvement report for Primary Care.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Cathal Morgan,
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations