



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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16th March 2020

Deputy Bernard Durkan
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: bernard.durkan@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Durkan,

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 3792/20

To ask the Minister for Health when provision will be made for a residential programme to be offered to children with profound sensory disabilities with particular reference for the need to address the concerns of parents that have tried on their own to cope; if arrangements will be made to ensure speech and language therapy will be offered without interruption to children with severe autism; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Disability services are provided based on the presenting needs of an individual rather than by the diagnosis of the individual or the actual type of disability or service required. Services are provided following individual assessment according to the person's individual requirements and care needs. Care and/or services provided are tailored to the individual needs and requirements of the child/adult with profound sensory disabilities.

Sensory disabilities usually refer to hearing impairment or visual impairment. Historically many children with significant hearing and/or visual impairments accessed the specialised School for the Deaf or School for the Blind in Dublin. Currently most children with hearing and / or visual impairments access education and health services locally. The Holy Family School for the Deaf in Cabra continues to provide a boarding facility.

The HSE does not have any plans to develop specific residential services for children with hearing and / or visual impairments.

Residential and Respite Services

The HSE acknowledges and values the work of carers and parents and is acutely aware of the challenges they face.

A range of supports are provided for carers, and the people they support, across our services for people with a disability. These include; Residential and Respite Services, Day Services, Home Support Services,



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and Therapeutic Supports. The HSE is very much aware of the importance of these services for the families of children and adults with disabilities, including the impact the absence of services can have on family life.

We know there is an ever growing need and demand for such services and it is a challenge to meet the needs of all those requiring supports; despite increased investment year on year.

The HSE continues to work with agencies to explore various ways of responding to this need in line with the budget available. A significant underlying challenge relates to the latent unmet need for residential and respite care, which exists in our services as a result of the absence of multi-annual investment during the economic downturn. At the same time, our national database figures indicate an annual requirement of 400 residential places per year to meet identified needs. As a result of this we are now experiencing a high annual demand for emergency residential places to respond to the most urgent cases on our waiting list.

In recognising the service pressures and capacity issues in the sector, each CHO and all providers of residential services are required to implement measures to maximise to the greatest possible extent, the use of existing residential capacity and improve overall value for money in this sector. A range of control measures have been implemented at CHO level over the past two years to ensure that all service providers at local level prioritise the placement of the most urgent cases.

HSE Disability Services has been allocated c. €2 billion in 2020. With regard to residential, respite and emergency places for children and adults, the anticipated service activity levels will be:

- Provision of over 8,000 residential places
- Provision of additional 56 new emergency residential placements
- Provision of eight appropriate residential places for people currently living in respite care as an emergency response to their needs, while also freeing up the vacated respite accommodation for future use
- Provision of 144 intensive transitional support packages for children and young people with complex / high support needs focusing on families experiencing substantial levels of support need, but who do not require a high cost long term placement. Specifically, this new development initiative is the pre-crisis intervention stage and will include:
 - intensive in-home visiting supports
 - planned residential respite interventions
 - specialist behavioural support interventions
 - access to planned extended day / weekend and summer day based activities
- Provision of 166,183 nights (with or without day respite) to people with disabilities.

Overall Reform of Children's Disability Services - Progressing Disability Services Programme

The HSE acknowledges the challenges in meeting the demand for children's disability services and is acutely conscious of how this impacts on children and their families.

A number of service improvements are being introduced that, when implemented, will help improve access to services for children with disabilities and developmental delays. The overall programme of improvement is the ongoing roll out of Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS). This requires the reorganisation of all current HSE and HSE funded children's disability services into geographically-based Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs).

PDS is doing this by forming partnerships between all the disability organisations in an area and pooling their staff with expertise in the different types of disabilities to form the CDNTs. These teams will provide for all children with significant disability, regardless of their disability, where they live or where they go to school.

The HSE is establishing a total of 96 Children's Disability Networks across each of the nine CHOs comprised of Specialist Multi-Disciplinary Teams to work with children with complex disability needs. Each Network will have a Children's Disability Network Manager with specialist expertise in providing children's disability clinical services. The appointment of these managers will facilitate the establishment of the Children's Disability Network Teams in 2020.

Children with severe autism can access Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT's) for services, including Speech and Language Therapy (SLT). Where services have not yet reconfigured to CDNT's, the introduction of Children's Disability Network Managers in 2020 will facilitate improved access to services, including SLT.

Additional Therapy Resources including Speech and language therapy for Children's Disability Services.

An additional 100 new therapy posts were provided in 2019. 97 of these posts have already been appointed and the remaining posts will be in place in Q1 2020. These therapy posts range from Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Social Workers, Psychologists, Dieticians and Allied Health Professional Assistants. These welcome new additional posts will impact on both assessment of need as well as support interventions for children with complex disability concerns.

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.

Review of Irish Health Services for Autistic people.

It should be noted that the HSE is also implementing recommendations arising from the *Review of the Irish Health Services for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2018)*.

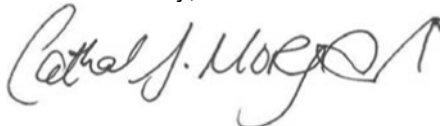
This programme of capacity building and public awareness has a budget of €2m of new investment specific to the needs of this vulnerable group.

The HSE welcomes the €2 million funding secured in Budget 2020 for the Autism Plan. In accordance with the National Service Plan, the additional funding secured will be used in a number of priority areas:

- To implement a programme of awareness raising that can provide a better information resource for children and parents about what supports are available;
- To deliver a campaign to assist in creating awareness of the challenges, needs and experiences of people with autism;
- To build capacity and competence amongst key professionals working with autism – including a national training programme for clinicians and the implementation of a tiered model of assessment in order to improve access to and responses by services for those with ASD.

The HSE's ASD Programme Board has begun work to implement the recommendations of the Review that includes a more streamlined clinical pathway for service users; collaborative working with parents; tiered assessment; more structured transition planning and ASD training for staff.

Yours sincerely,



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



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