



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
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6th April 2021

Deputy Richard Bruton,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: richard.bruton@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Bruton,

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: 14556/21

To ask the Minister for Health if he has completed his review of the support therapies from early intervention and school age teams; the key conclusions in terms of timely access; if new policy initiatives have been identified; and if different structures or models are under consideration.

HSE Response

The Department of Education has undertaken a review of the school inclusion pilot project which provides in-school speech & language therapy and occupational therapy services. This project comes under the remit of Department of Education.

The HSE is currently implementing the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS) programme which will help improve access to services for children with disabilities and developmental delays. This requires the reorganisation of all current HSE and HSE funded children's disability services into geographically-based CDNTs.

The PDS 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 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 diagnosis, where they live or where they go to school.

The HSE is establishing a total of 91 Children's Disability Networks across each of the nine CHOs comprised of Specialist Inter-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 quarter 1 and quarter 2 of this year.

As part of its ongoing quality improvement programme the HSE is committed to undertaking a review of the operation of these teams once reconfiguration has been completed. The detail of this review is yet to be agreed.

Developments in 2021

The HSE welcomes the recent announcements from the Government of additional funding for Disability Services:

- An additional €100 million secured for Disability Services in the recent budget. In the National Service Plan for 2021, the HSE commits to:
 - Implementing fully the revised standard operating procedure and the national access policy within CHOs through the children's disability network teams and progress the delivery of the assessment of need process in line with legal requirements.
 - Providing 100 additional multi-disciplinary posts within children's network teams to improve assessment of need and treatment with a particular focus on behavioural, dietetics and paediatric services within the children's disability network teams and move towards the completion of reconfiguration under progressing disability services.
 - The NSP also commits to the development of additional Respite Services and in-home intensive transitional support packages.
- €20 million in one-off grants will be provided to reform disability services, build the capacity of disability organisations and to improve the quality of life of those who rely on these services.
- €7.8 million has been allocated by Sláintecare to facilitate the HSE and its funded service providers to address the overdue Assessments of Need for children and young adults with disabilities.

Yours sincerely,



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