



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

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6th April 2021

Deputy David Cullinane,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: david.cullinane@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 15607/21

To ask the Minister for Health the timeline for implementing the progressing disability services programme; the changes this will result in; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 15608/21

To ask the Minister for Health if children with disabilities will still be able to access disability services based on the location they go to school as opposed to their home address under the progressing disability services programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 15609/21

To ask the Minister for Health if the HSE will consult with parents whose children are affected by the changes under the progressing disability services programme to ensure that changes to children's disability services do not worsen accessibility or convenience; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

The implementation of the Progressing Disability Services for Children & Young People (PDS) programme is agreed Government and HSE policy. This policy supports the reconfiguration of Children's Disability Services to provide equitable, child and family centred services based on need rather than diagnosis. The PDS programme will ensure that services are provided for children with complex needs regardless of where they live or where they go to school. Each Community Healthcare Organisation will work with key stakeholders in their area including parents and education services to ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place to facilitate in-reach services to special school settings as appropriate.

Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme (PDS) is a significant change programme for the provision of services and supports for children from birth to 18 years of age, in line with Slaintecare and the Programme for Government, in order to:

- Provide a clear pathway and fairer access to services for all children with a disability.
- Make the best use of available resources for the benefit of all children and their families

- Ensure effective teams are working in partnership with families and with education staff to support children with a disability to reach their full potential.

PDS aligns with two clear objectives of The Sláintecare Report to:

- Provide the majority of care at or as close to home as possible
- Create an integrated system of care with healthcare professionals working closely together.

Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) are being established to provide services and supports for all children with complex needs within a defined geographic area. To date, 31 CDNs have been established and it is envisaged that the remaining 60 CDNs will be established by end Q2 2021.

CDNTs are teams of health and social care professionals, including occupational therapy, psychology, nursing, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social work and others. The team will work closely together in a family centred model, focussing on the child's and family's own priorities. Once all teams are in place, every child with complex needs will have access to a team, regardless of the nature of their disability, where they live, or the school they attend.

Children and their families will have access to the full range of services and supports of the CDNT according to their individual needs. This includes universal, targeted and specialist supports, such as individual therapeutic intervention and access to specialist consultation and assessment when needed. Supports will be provided as is feasible in the child's natural environments - their home, school and community.

Under PDS, transition plans will be developed with families and special schools to ensure a smooth and safe transition from what is often a unidisciplinary service into the multidisciplinary team over a defined period of time.

The Framework for Collaborative Working between Education and Health Professionals was developed in consultation with parents, health and education staff. Its purpose is to identify and address gaps between health and education in provision of services with a focus on joined up planning and working together. There is a National Collaborative Forum in place and local Education and Health Forums are being established throughout the country.

In the context of all of the above, we are working to ensure there is a continuation of services for the children attending specials schools and that safe and effective transition plans are put in place and carried out in an appropriate way in full consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,



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