



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

**Office of the Head of Operations,**  
Disability Services/Social Care Division,  
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2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023

Deputy Holly Cairns,  
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Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
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Dear Deputy Cairns,

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: 19180/23**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if he will outline the funding streams and training options available to assist in caring for children with disabilities who require tube feeding but are under three-years-of-age.*

**HSE Response**

Children require feeding tubes (including nasogastric or peg tube) for different kinds of health problems, including: congenital (present at birth,) anomalies of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, stomach or bowel, sucking and swallowing disorders (due to premature birth, injury, a developmental delay, or another condition).

Meeting the health and care requirements for children with disabilities who require tube feeding to ensure their nutritional requirements are met for normal health, growth and development, spans across various service provision including Acute Services, Primary Care and Disability Services.

Parents /carers of children who require tube feeding receive training in the acute service in advance of the child's discharge home. This includes input from various disciplines including medical, nursing, dietetic and therapy services. There is also further follow up and facility to access further training at any stage following discharge from acute services.

Companies who supply the products required for maintaining tube feeding for these children operate a 24/7 support helpline which is available to assist with any query or difficulty that may arise in the use of these feeding systems. All service users and their families/careers are made aware of the contact details for these support lines. They also offer a wide range of educational and support material, videos, etc. covering enteral feeding on their websites and these can be readily accessed by service users and their families.

Children who are tube fed may also have additional health needs. Children under the age of 6 ordinarily resident in Ireland, are entitled to free visits to a participating GP. Children are included in this scheme until the end of the month of the child's 6th birthday. The GP card covers free GP visits, including home visits and out-of-hours urgent GP care.



If the family/parents already have a medical card, there is no need to register children under 6 for this scheme

Parents of children who require tube feeding may be able to apply for a medical card. Further information can be obtained by accessing the link below. Discretionary medical cards are reviewed and assessed by medical officers and deciding officers.

<https://www2.hse.ie/services/schemes-allowances/medical-cards/applying/apply/>

As there are many hundreds of children in Ireland with different types of feeding tubes/ requirements, further support and information can be obtained from sites such as:

<https://www.tube-feeding.com/Downloadable-Resources>

Further information can be obtained from Temple Street Children's University Hospital, Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin, and Tallaght University Hospital

Yours sincerely,



**Mr Bernard O'Regan,  
Head of Operations  
Disability Services, Community Operations**

