

25th July, 2023

Mr Thomas Gould, TD.,
Dáil Eireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 34065/23

“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the total number of respite hours provided to families in Cork over each of the past 12 months; the total number that has been provided each month since March 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Gould,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth for response.

The HSE and its funded Agencies provide respite care to children and adults with disabilities. Respite can occur in a variety of settings for various lengths of time, depending on the needs of the individual service user and their family or carer, and according to available resources. Respite is not always centre-based and can be provided in a number of ways, e.g. Centre based; In-Home; Home-to-Home; Family Support, etc. As a vital part of the continuum of services for families, respite potentially helps prevent out-of-home full-time residential placements, preserves the family unit, and supports family stability.

The provision of residential respite services has come under increasing pressure in the past couple of years due to a number of impacting factors such as, an increase in the number of children and adults who are seeking access to respite as a reflection of general population increase; increasing levels of complexity across the sector due to better and improved health care; an increase in the age of people with a disability resulting in people presenting with “changing needs”.

In addition, a significant number of respite beds have been utilised for long term residential placements due to the presenting complexity of the individual with a disability and also due to home circumstances, therefore, the numbers of people with disabilities in receipt of residential respite services and the corresponding number of respite nights has reduced when compared to previous activity.

A further impact to the delivery of respite has been in response to the regulation of service provision as set by the Health Information and Quality Authority regulatory and policy context. HIQA has established and set the way in which residential/respite services is provided requiring the Agencies comply with regulatory standards in order to meet regulation. Standards specify a requirement for personal and appropriate space impacting on the capacity and Statement of Purpose for a Designated Centre. This has had a direct impact on capacity where respite beds are no longer allowed within a residential setting e.g. vacated by residents who go home at weekends or for holidays, can no longer be used for respite. Implementation of the national policy on congregated settings (Time to Move on from Congregated Settings Policy) is also affecting capacity.

Respite Services for Children

A Cork Regional Children's Respite Forum was established in 2022. The Forum Committee manages referrals and respite service provision in the Cork area. The overall purpose of the Committee is that children up to the age of 18 years with a disability, who are in receipt of services from a CDNT in Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CKCH) would be eligible to apply for respite and/or home support services. The Forum is still in its infancy however applications are in process and reviewed, assessed and approved based on agreed access criteria - appropriate referral pathway to the committee; assessment based on level of need; the most appropriate provision for each child and thereafter on the basis of capacity and availability of service.

This process will ensure there is an equitable provision of service based on prioritised needs. These services will be provided for children with disabilities i.e. intellectual, physical/sensory and/or Moderate-Severe Autism. Previously respite provision was linked with attendance at Special Schools.

In Cork overnight respite services for children under 18 years of age with an intellectual disability, physical disability or autism is delivered by a range of organisations namely, Enable Ireland, St. Josephs Foundation, Cope Foundation, CoAction and the Brothers of Charity and private service providers. There are a total of 25 beds however, 4 of the beds are closed or at reduced capacity due to staffing shortages. 6 Beds were closed until the first week in July 2023 and they are now re-opened. There is also a number of sessions of day respite provided to children which consists of a centre based day and outreach services for children.

Residential Services for Adults

A Regional Adults Respite Forum for Adults is in place and it process applications and allocates respite to adults.

In Cork a total of 89 beds (28 full time, 61 part time) are available for overnight respite services for adults over 18 years with intellectual disability, physical disability or autism is delivered by a range of organisations namely, Cope Foundation, Enable Ireland, St. Josephs Foundation, CoAction, Abode, Praxis Care, Rehabcare and the Brothers of Charity. Not all of the aforementioned beds are in operation all of the time as there are e.g. service user compatibility issues, emergency residential placements and ongoing staffing challenges.

Garrettstown Regional Respite Centre opened in early 2022 in Garrettstown, Co. Cork with 5 beds. Services are provided by Brothers of Charity (BOC) and provides overnight adult respite. Respite is accessed via the Regional Respite Forum.

Regrettably there was no additional funding for residential respite in CHO 4 under NSP 2023 and limited funding for alternative respite. We fully recognise the value of respite supports of all forms to families to provide a much needed break for themselves, their other family members and most importantly for the child and adult themselves. We continue to actively engage with all services providers within funding available to increase and maximise respite services.

Please see appendix 1 and 2 which provides data collected from Monthly Metrics i.e. Key Performance Indicators. Note the data on Respite (Day and Overnight) is collected and provided in days and Home Support data is in hours.

The two tables are as follows:

Table 1 - Adults and Children: Respite Days - Jan. 2021 to Mar. 2023

Table 2 - Adults and Children: Home Support Hours - Jan. 2021 to Mar. 2023

If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Ms. Majella Daly,
Head of Disability Services,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare



Appendix 1

Adults and Children: Respite Days - Jan. 2021 to Mar. 2023

Respite Hours	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total Provided Yearly
2021	539	553	594	614	777	776	908	924	948	997	942	708	9,280
2022	707	852	909	927	1061	1149	815	939	1237	1155	1044	882	11,677
2023	1132	1164	1231	Q2 - unavailable	Q2 - unavailable	Q2 - unavailable	Q3 - unavailable	Q3 - unavailable	Q3 - unavailable	Q4 - unavailable	Q4 - unavailable	Q4 - unavailable	3,527
Monthly Totals	2378	2569	2734	1541	1838	1925	1723	1863	2185	2152	1986	1590	24,484

Table 1

Adults and Children: Home Support Hours - Jan. 2021 to Mar. 2023

Home Support Hours	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total Provided Yearly
2021	17617	17345	17603	18450	18545	18590	20284	19959	18665	20238	18447	17355	223,098
2022	15405	14639	15816	16306	16338	16630	16604	17347	17437	16971	17307	16921	197,721
2023	17295	16818	18136	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	52,249
Monthly Total:	50317	48802	51555	34756	34883	35220	36888	37306	36102	37209	35754	34276	473,068

Table 2

