

9<sup>th</sup> August, 2023

Mr. Sean Sherlock, TD.,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Dublin 2

**PQ 35639/23**

**“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of respite beds allocated to a school (details supplied) since 30 May 2023.”**

**Detail Supplied: Carrigaline Community Special School**

Dear Deputy,

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; Community Outreach, Saturday Clubs, Family Support, etc. CKCH Disability Services recognises respite as a vital part of the continuum of services for families.

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.

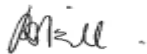
A Regional Children’s Respite Forum was established in 2022, covering Cork City & County. The Forum Committee manages referrals and allocates respite service provision in the Cork area. The overall purpose of the Committee is that children aged between 6 and 18 years, in receipt of services from a CDNT in Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CKCH) including students at Carrigaline Special School, would be eligible to apply for respite services. 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. There is no specific allocation of beds to Carrigaline Special School, or to any other school. Allocation is provided on the basis of assessed need and as such there is no discrimination on the basis of school patronage.

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 open on a phased basis. There is also a number of sessions of day respite provided to children which consists of a centre based day and outreach service for children.

Respite vacancies were discussed at the recent Children's Respite Forum (17<sup>th</sup> July, 2023) and vacant places were allocated according to the associated decision support tool. It is expected that placements will become available from September 2023 and families will be contacted by post to advise of same by the relevant service provider.

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

Yours sincerely



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**Ms. Patricia O'Neill,  
A/Head of Disability Services,  
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**

