

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

Mr. Holly Cairns, TD.,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Dublin 2

**PQ 35656/23**

**“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if his Department will provide a school (details supplied) with access to the waiting list for overnight respite services; the actions his Department is taking to ensure that regardless of patronage, all special schools have equal access to waiting lists for disability services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

**Detail Supplied: Carrigaline Community Special School**

Dear Deputy Cairns,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, 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. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (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.

**Respite Services:**

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 Children’s Disability Network Team (CDNT) in CKCH 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.

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 Autism. Prior to the development of the forum, respite provision was linked with attendance at Special Schools.

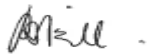
In Cork, overnight respite services for children under 18 years of age with an intellectual disability, physical disability or autism is delivered by a range of organisations namely, Enable Ireland, St. Josephs Foundation, Cope Foundation, CoAction and the Brothers of Charity and private service providers. 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 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.

The newly established Children's Respite Forum had, up to 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2023 received 113 applications and of these 60 have been approved for respite provision. Access to the Respite Forum is not restricted on the basis of school patronage. A number of children who attend the school in question have successfully applied for respite provision through the forum to date, with services due to commence in Q3 and Q4 2023.

Regrettably there is limited funding for residential and alternative respite in CKCH under NSP 2023. 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 children themselves. We continue to actively engage with all services providers within funding available to increase and maximise respite services.

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**

