

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

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

**PQ ref 35657/23**

**“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of overnight respite beds in Cork at present; whether his Department will consider expanding the number of beds available as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”**

Dear Deputy Carins,

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:**

### *(a.) 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 open. 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.

### *Number Availing of Respite/ Number on Waiting List*

We have requested and received figures from all but one agency in Cork, however as we do not have a system to validate these returns we are instead providing KPI data as of Q1 March 2023. This does not include Waiting list data. Total Number of Children with a disability that were in receipt of respite service and day only respite in the first quarter of 2023 was 177. The total number of overnights provided was 237.

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. Some of the remaining applications were returned due to insufficiency of information and others will be presented at the next forum meeting.

### *(a.1) Staffing of Children's Respite Service:*

Recruitment of staff nationally is particularly challenging. The pool of suitably qualified staff is limited and we have to continue to ensure that agreed recruitment standards for each role is maintained whether with direct or agency employment. In the first instance service providers need to maintain residential staffing at an optimal level as this is the fulltime home for residents. Funded providers are very mindful of ensuring good governance, quality and compliance when using Agency staff and must ensure staff are Garda Vetted, trained and competent in the area of Children's respite. Therefore not all agencies are suitable to provide suitable cover for staffing vacancies.

### *(a.2) Developments:*

National Service Plan funding 2022 has been used to fund an approved proposal from Enable Ireland for an increase in Children's respite in the Lavanagh Centre, Curaheen, Cork. Lavanagh House currently offers 138 bednights. The new development will increase this provision by 690 bednights giving a total of 828 bednights. A total of 48 children (referrals through the childrens' respite forum) will benefit in a full year from this development. It will provide an overnight respite service at 6 nights per week (Mon-Sun) over 46 weeks. This will commence on a phased basis from mid-June to September of this year and Enable Ireland, who are being funded to provide the service are currently recruiting the necessary staffing requirement.

In addition agencies have been asked to submit Business Cases to increase capacity within their services once their funded level of service resumes. These Business Cases will be escalated nationally for funding for 2023 as appropriate and for 2024 Estimates Process.



## **Respite Services:**

### *(a.) 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.

### *Number Availing of Respite/ Number on Waiting List*

We have requested and received figures from all but one agency in Cork, however as we do not have a system to validate these returns we are instead providing KPI data as of Q1 March 2023. This does not include waiting list data.

Total Number of Adults with a disability that were in receipt of respite service and day only respite in the first quarter of 2023 was 481. The total number of overnights provided was 910.

### a.1) Developments:

Regrettably there was no additional funding for residential respite in Cork Kerry community Healthcare 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 children and adults 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,



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

