



Oifig an Stiúrthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,  
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta, An Chéad  
Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15, Áras Phlásóg na Rós,  
Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile, Páirc  
Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta, Caladh an  
Treoigh, Luimneach

Office of the Assistant National  
Director, National Disability Team,  
First Floor- Offices 13, 14, 15,  
Roselawn House, University Business  
Complex, National Technology Park,  
Castletroy, Limerick.

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025

Deputy Donna McGettigan,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [donna.mcgettigan@oireachtas.ie](mailto:donna.mcgettigan@oireachtas.ie)

**PQ: 20786/25**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the measures enacted or are planned to give effect to the Programme for Government commitment to engage with stakeholders to "create more targeted, effective services for children with special needs."*

Dear Deputy McGettigan,

Thank you for your Parliamentary Question referenced above, which has been forwarded to me for direct reply.

The Programme for Government 2025 "*Securing Ireland's Future*", published on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025, aims to provide a step change in the supports and services required by people with disabilities.

The 2025 HSE Service Plan which has been prepared in line with strategic priorities and has been guided by:

- The 2025 Programme for Government
- Priorities set by the Minister for Health and Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
- The policy framework, Sláintecare
- Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026.

### **Childrens Disability Services**

93 Childrens Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) are aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country and are providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age.

The model of service for all CDNTs is family-centred and based on the needs of the child. This includes universal, targeted and specialised supports and interventions, as appropriate to the individual child and family. It is based on the objectives of empowering and supporting parents and others who are with the child on a daily basis to facilitate the child's developmental needs.

The CDNTs are currently providing services and supports for 43,000 children and strategies and supports for urgent cases on the waitlist where staffing resources allow.

### **Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People**

The HSE's Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People is a targeted Service Improvement Programme of 60 actions to achieve a quality, accessible, equitable and timely service for all children with complex needs as a result of a disability and their families.

The Roadmap, has four Working Groups which report into a Service Improvement Programme Board



Working Group 1 **Integrated Children's Services** – has responsibility for the implementation of National Access Policy (NAP) and the Primary Care, Disability, CAMHS Joint Working Protocol (JWP), Equity of Access to Aids and Appliances across all CHOs; and the Review of HSE Tusla Joint Protocol.

Working Group 2: **Service Access and Improvement** – has responsibility for Waitlist Management and Services; Optimising Teams Efficiencies, Effectiveness and Governance; AONs overdue for completion; and the development of a National Capital plan to enable all staff of a CDNT to be co-located.

Working Group 3: **Workforce** – has 21 actions dedicated to Retention of specialised CDNT staff, Recruitment of new graduates and experienced staff for all CDNTs Deployment of Students/Trainees/New Graduates; and Development of Existing Staff.

Working Group 4: **Communication and Engagement** – has responsibility for developing and ensuring the delivery of a rolling Communication Plan for the Roadmap and CDNT service, which is a key priority; review and updating the HSE PDS Website to meet information needs of families, further Staff Engagement and Workshop days and ensuring sustainability of the Family Forums and Family Representative Groups.

Two parent voices on each of the above Working Groups except Workforce, and also on the Service Improvement Programme Board, are bringing their lived experience and that of their families to inform the development and implement of the 60 Roadmap Actions. Parent voices were also sought for the Workforce Working Group via the 8 Family Representative Groups in place across the country but this was not taken up.

Under the National *CHO CDNT Governance Group Policy V.2 (2020)*, 91 of the 93 Family Forums are in place at CDNT level to harness families' insights and ideas for service improvement. Two family representatives are elected by each Family Forum to participate on a regional Family Representative Group (FRG), of which 8 are now in place. The FRG in turn has elected 2 of its reps onto the CHO CDNT Governance Group comprising the HSE and HSE funded Lead Agencies who lead and govern the CDNTs.

Two years from these structures being established, Genio completed an independent review in April 2025 on the functionality and sustainability of Family Forums and FRGs and the HSE is currently developing an action plan to address Genio's recommendations from the review.

HSE Disability Services has been engaging with the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality (DCDE) in relation to their draft Programme for Government Delivery Plan. This includes implementation of the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-26, and resourcing and delivering on its targets as well as developing a new vision for specialist disability supports and services for 2030 and a revised Capacity Review.

In addition to the above, in Children's Disability Services, the HSE is involved in a Cross-Sectoral Group on disability issues for children & young people and is working to complete the special schools pilot. The HSE is also working with DCDE to develop a more tiered approach to AON, which may involve legislative change. There has also been engagement with Dept. of Education to remove school principals' requirement that an AON report is needed to determine educational need.

The HSE is also engaging with DCDE in measures to strengthen financial oversight and assess and measure unit costing of services. This will support the PfG commitment regarding the development of a multi-annual approach to Disability Services.

DCDE is also supporting the HSE in developing a disability specific workforce strategy and workforce plan to support delivery and implement specific staff retention actions and innovative recruitment initiatives, with a clear priority focus on CDNTs.

The HSE is involved with the Department led Steering Group on Disability Data to drive strategic initiatives which will enhance the availability, accuracy and use of disability data. An initial programme of work has been developed with particular focus on enhancing line of sight on expenditure and understanding unit costs and cost drivers.

The HSE is also involved in a Department led initiative regarding increasing the number of training places in Higher Education Institutions programmes for Health and Social Care Professions to drive the pipeline of supply to meet growing service demands including in the Disability Sector.



The Disability Stakeholder Strategic Advisory Group (DSSAG) is a standing group of some of the key stakeholders from the disability sector. The group comprises members of disabled person's organisations, advocacy organisations, service provider umbrella groups and statutory organisations. The group's remit is to provide advice and make recommendations regarding high level disability policy and strategy. The Group also acts as the Monitoring Group for the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026.

The group is chaired by DCEDIY and includes representatives from:

- Disabled Persons' Organisation Network
- The National Platform of Self-Advocates
- Inclusion Ireland
- Disability Federation of Ireland
- National Disability Services Association
- National Federation of Voluntary Service-Providers
- National Disability Authority

Yours Sincerely,

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Dr. Aoife O'Donohue,  
Stiúrthóir Náisiúnta Cúntóir, Seirbhísí Mhíchumas, Rochtain agus Imeascadh,  
Assistant National Director, Disability Services, Transformation & Programme Coordination,  
Access & Integration