



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,
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24th October 2025

Deputy Catherine Ardagh,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: catherine.ardagh@oireachtas.ie

PQ: 56858/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the measures being taken to ensure equitable access to respite across regions, given the reports of oversubscription in some CHOs; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 56864/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality if she will publish quarterly updates on the number of children receiving respite; the number waiting, by CHO; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 56865/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the oversight mechanisms which exist to ensure that HSE disability managers are delivering on national respite targets; and if she will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy Ardagh,

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

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 following table shows Respite Services activity levels from 2019 – 2025:

	2019	2020*	2021*	2022	2023	2024	Scheduled 2025
Respite Overnights	158,441	87,177	94,606	133,572	151,123	160,952	164,059
Respite Day only Sessions	35,861	21,175	16,306	28,587	45,424	64,162	65,151
People in receipt of Respite	6,040	3,604	5,399	6,006	6,137	6,640	7,460

* In 2020/21, the delivery of Respite Services continued to operate during the pandemic, albeit at a reduced capacity; some centres remained open, while others were temporarily re-purposed as isolation facilities.

The level of activity shows that pre COVID-19, the number of Respite Overnights provided by the HSE and its partner Provider Agencies was running at around 158,000 Overnights each year. The delivery of services was significantly impacted by the onset of the pandemic in 2020/21. The number of respite overnights operated at just over 50% of the



NSP target for 2020, due mainly to necessary precautions to maintain physical distancing and to adhere to infection prevention and control requirements.

Since the pandemic, there has been increased investment in Respite Services that included additional allocation in successive National Service Plans. However, there has also been increased costs due to more stringent infection prevention and control measures and an overall increase complexity of presenting need.

Respite has been and continues to be a key priority area for the HSE for people with disabilities and their families and this significant investment in respite services over the last few years has resulted in an increase in the number of respite overnights each year since COVID-19. We can see this growth in particular in 2025, with the level of activity scheduled to deliver 164,059 respite overnights and 65,151 Day Only Sessions to 7,460 people. This represents a significant increase of 82% on the pre-covid levels for Day Sessions and a 24% increase on the number of people in receipt of respite services during the period 2019 to 2025.

In 2024, we delivered 160,952 overnights and 64,162 day only sessions to around 6,975 people with a disability. A comparison of 2023 and 2024 activity data, shows an increase of 9,351 respite overnights, representing a growth rate of 6.2% and additional Day-Only Sessions of 19,721 and a growth rate of 43.4%.

At the end of Quarter 2 2025, we delivered 82,609 overnight sessions and 33,966 day only respite sessions to 7,460 people with disabilities. (Please note that the figures are adjusted for non return of data). These day respite sessions include alternative respite provision such as in-home respite support hours, home sharing short breaks and group-based targeted services such as summer camps and evening sessions.

Respite Data Reporting

The HSE's Performance Profile (PP) provides an overall analysis of key performance data across care groups, such as Acute Services, Mental Health, Disability Services, Primary Care, Older Persons, Health and Wellbeing as well as Finance and Human Resources. The activity data reported is based on Performance Activity and Key Performance Indicators outlined in the current National Service Plan.

The Business Information Unit Community Health Care - collates the HSE's Performance Reports (PP), which provide an overall analysis of key performance data from Community Services. The activity data reported is based on Performance Activity and Key Performance Indicators outlined in the National Service Plan.

The latest reports are available are on this page.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/performance-reports/management-data-report-may-2025.pdf>

Key Performance Indicator Metadata are completed for all National Service Plan metrics and provide the most up to date information relating to KPIs.

With regard to oversight of respite provision, Disability Services data, including respite provision, is collected and reported by each area and collated nationally by the HSE Business Information Unit. The metrics are reported monthly and quarterly.

Currently data for children's respite provision is not collated separately from adult provision.

The HSE endeavours to achieve the annual targets for service provision as set out in the annual National Service Plan. The Letters of Determination, which are sent to each Regional Healthcare Area following publication of the Service Plan, sets out the required level of activity to be achieved in each area.

In NSP 2025, additional allocation has been provided to increase the occupancy of existing respite capacity, where feasible, and alternative respite provision, including in-home respite support hours and group-based targeted measures such as summer camps and evening provision.

During the period 2019 to 2025, the continued collaborative working by the HSE, the voluntary sector and the private sector ensured that there was considerable growth in the level of services delivered to people with a disability, including the delivery of new developments as outlined in successive National Service Plans.

In relation to respite service, the HSE is working in conjunction with DCDE to develop a working paper to examine provision to date, demand, and challenges to inform future respite provision. This will include a HSE Audit of the capacity & provision of respite services across all Health Regions.



Budget 2026

Budget 2026, announced on Tuesday the 7th October 2025, secured €3.8 billion for the delivery of disability services in partnership with the HSE which was an a 20% increase on 2025 funding.

While this includes funding for day, overnight respite and expanding home sharing services as a viable respite alternative, the specific details regarding the allocation of 2026 funding will not be clarified until the HSE receives the 2026 Letter Of Determination or the written/agreed 2026 National Service Plan.

Future Planning

There is significant unmet need currently and the projected changes in the size and age profile of the disability population will add to unmet need over the coming decade.

With regard to centre based respite, the Disability Capacity Review informs of up to €10 million in additional provision per year is required (20% additional quantum – 26,200 approx. additional overnights per year).

The Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026, prepared by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, details the mix of overnight and alternative respite that will be provided in the short term, and will aim to maximise the impact and reach of these services.

It is proposed to increase the level of respite provision by around a third, through a mix of:

- Provision of alternative respite options including in-home respite, after-school and day respite programmes, host families, summer programmes;
- Using existing overnight residential capacity to the maximum extent;
- Providing additional overnight respite capacity where this is needed.

HSE Disability Services has been engaging with 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.

Yours Sincerely,

Tom McGuirk,
General Manager, Disability Services, Access & Integration