



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: 56862/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the in-home supports which are currently funded for children with high support needs; if these can be expanded as an interim measure while respite services are oversubscribed; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 56866/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality if an audit of children's respite provision has been undertaken since 2022; and, if so, to publish its findings; 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.

Respite is a key priority area for the HSE for people with disabilities and their families and we have seen significant investment in respite services, which has impacted positively on the level of service delivered in successive years.

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.



With regard to the question concerning an audit of children's respite provision, 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.

A review conducted of the July 2025, HIQA Register has provided the following information:

- There are 164 centres with a total of 798 respite beds – Overall
- 90 centres with a total of 423 respite beds – Adults
- 47 centres with a total of 227 respite beds – Children's
- 27 centres with a total of 148 respite beds – Mixed (Some centres provide respite for both adults and children on alternating weeks).

With regard to the question concerning expansion of in-home supports, allocation of service provision is based on the individual's needs and circumstances. HSE Service Managers work with service users and their families as well as the Service Providers of respite services to ensure the provision of a client focused service, establish priority need and ensure best practice and maximisation of funding and other resources.

The HSE also provides significant Home Support Services to support families of children and adults with disabilities. In 2025, the HSE will provide 3.8 million hours of Home Support to 7,500 adults and children in 2025.

Home Sharing

In a funding environment of high cost respite services and the need to provide more alternative and person centred options for respite, Home Sharing is a specific, viable and low cost model of alternative respite, and strategically important moving forward. Home Sharing is an internationally recognised model of support for both children and adults with a disability, it is defined as the provision of care to people with a disability in the Home Sharing family's home. The uniqueness of Home Sharing is that for suitable individuals' and their families, Home Sharing offers a genuine person centred option, which places an individual in a family, in a community setting and with multiple placement options to suit their needs. Home Sharing is primarily delivered across section 38 and 39 service providers as part of the National Home-sharing and Short-breaks Network (NHSN).

Intensive Support Packages

This was a new development initiative put in place in 2020 and then further developed in 2021. The rationale behind the initiative was to demonstrate a person-centred approach to targeted supports designed to maintain the person in their own home and community, reducing a risk of future residential needs.

Previously referred to as intensive transitional support packages, these supports were mainly aimed at children and young people with complex/high support needs experiencing substantial levels of need, but who do not, as yet, require a high cost long term residential placement. The intention being to prevent family breakdown and demand for emergency residential placements by providing access to pre-crisis interventions such as:

- Intensive in-home visiting supports;
- Planned residential respite interventions;
- Specialist behavioural support interventions
- Access to planned extended day / weekend and summer day based activities.

To end September, 2025, the HSE has provided 686 intensive support packages, including 126 new packages and 560 packages delivered in 2024 which have been maintained in 2025.

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.

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.

Yours Sincerely,

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