Keeping you informed about this national programme for the restructuring of children’s disability therapy services

Disability services for children have a long history in Ireland and organisations provide excellent services for children and their families. They have a high level of expertise and family centred interdisciplinary teams, with nearly everything provided in one location.

However, because services have developed independently and may look after only one specific group of children who have a particular disability, there is wide variation in the services available in different parts of the country and for different categories of disability. For instance there may be a service for children with an intellectual disability in your locality, but none for children with a physical disability or with autism. As a consequence some children and their families have little or no access to services.

We need a more equitable and consistent way to provide services for children with disabilities and their families and must work together to achieve the greatest benefit possible within our resources.

A HSE led national programme is changing the way services are provided across the country to ensure more equitable and consistent services and supports for children with disabilities and their families. To achieve this consistently, we must work together to achieve the greatest benefit possible within our resources. A national programme is changing the way services are provided across the country. It is based on the recommendations of the Report of the National Reference Group on Multidisciplinary Services for Children aged 5-18 Years available to read on the HSE website along with other information about the programme: http://www.hse.ie/progressingdisabilityservices.

The organisation of services in the future

Many children with delays in development can have their needs met by their local Primary Care services (public health nurse, community speech and language therapy, family doctor, community physiotherapy etc). Early intervention and school age disability teams will provide a more specialised service for all children with complex needs and their families in an area.

How will this be different?

Instead of having separate services for children with learning disability or physical disability or autism, all children who need a team disability service will have access to their local early intervention or school age team. This means that health professionals and parents, instead of trying to find their way through a maze of services, will know where a child should be referred. Importantly our aim is that no family will be left without a service.

How is the programme being organised?

The programme is organised at national, regional and local level with representatives of disability organisations, parents, the HSE and the Departments of Health and Education.

There are regional leads and local leads for the programme across the country. The local leads have brought together representatives from services and parents, to see how current services can be reorganised to achieve this improved structure. This includes finding out what is currently available for children with disabilities, what the needs of the children are locally, planning how best to use these resources and making sure throughout that there is good consultation and communication. Guidance and direction from the national and regional levels of the project to local teams is helping to drive a consistent approach throughout the country.

Other Initiatives

As this is a national programme of change in the way children’s disability services are delivered, it is offering us opportunities to look more widely at general issues in the way we support children with disabilities and their families. These include the development of a way to measure services according to outcomes achieved by children and their families as a result of our services and supports, which will help us to continually improve. Members of the working groups include parents, representatives of the professional bodies and others bringing specific expertise. They are consulting widely to draw on as much real experience as possible.

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Health and Education

Health services, schools and parents need to develop closer working relationships so that, together, they can ensure that children with disabilities make the most of their education. Parents deserve issues concerning the development of their children to be addressed in a holistic manner and not as two separate “health” and “education” components. The sectors are separately organised and their task is to make sure that parents can’t see the join! Representatives of education are involved in this programme at all levels and this is seen as an invaluable opportunity to advance a co-ordinated approach.

Learning from Experience

Health services in some areas such as in the mid-west, north-east and west of the country had already come together a few years ago and changed to provide unified services. While in each case they say that the change took effort, commitment and persistence and that more still needs to be done, they have found it has resulted in a much improved way of providing accessible comprehensive services which address the needs of all children with disabilities. Here are some of the comments from parents with children attending the Limerick Early Intervention Service where there are now teams who each provide services for all children within a Network area:

“My child has benefited enormously from the services he has received from the Early Intervention Centre, which included Physiotherapy, Early Intervention and Speech and Language therapy.”

“It’s great that a team is available and knows your situation before any session so that you don’t spend more time explaining everything again”

“Everything happened very quickly and that was a relief”.

Comment from staff of Meath Children’s Disability Services which is for all children of school age who require a team service regardless of their disability:

“Moving from having a specialist caseload (e.g. only working with children with autism) to a more mixed one was not as difficult as we thought it would be, and staff retention has actually improved markedly because working with children who have varied needs is less stressful and more rewarding”

These experiences of staff and parents are of great assistance to others as they plan what needs to be done and how to go about it in their own local area.

What stage has the programme reached?

Because of the way services have developed, each part of the country is coming from varying situations and therefore at differing stages. In some parts of the country including the Mid West, North East and the Midlands, services had already changed to this structure prior to the programme. In other places including Mayo, Galway, Roscommon, Sligo Leitrim and Donegal, Early Intervention Teams had been formed and they are now working to form School Age Teams. Services in West Cork, Kerry and Kildare have reconfigured recently into children’s disability teams. The other local implementation groups have the objective under the HSE National Service Plan 2014 of agreeing their plan for change and each local group is currently working to this end.

Limited resources are an issue and it will take a long time to achieve a comprehensive service structure throughout the country. However we have the vision of where we want to be and how the structures should be, and that’s a firm foundation to build on.

The vision for when the programme is completed

- One clear pathway to services for all children with disabilities according to need
- Effective teams working in partnership with parents
- Resources used to the greatest benefit for all children and families
- Health and education working together to support children achieve their potential
South of Dublin Region Interim Governance Group Update

The SDRIGG (South of Dublin Region Interim Governance Group) is committed to implementing the reconfiguration of services into Disability Network Teams as early as possible in 2015.

Members/Stakeholders
Representation from each of the agencies CEO or Director Level.
Parent Representative (DSW Parent Group), HSE Dublin Mid Leinster (DML) Regional Lead for Progressing Disability Services, HSE Local Leads for Progressing Disability Services (3 leads from Dublin South City, Dublin South East, Dublin South West, Dublin West, Dublin South) St Michael’s House, Cheeverstown House, Enable Ireland, Central Remedial Clinic, Stewarts Hospital, Saint John of Gods (Menni Services, Carmona Services, St Augustine’s) & HSE Beechpark Services.

Accommodation: The SDR have met with HSE Estates regarding the Disability Network Teams Accommodation requirements. An Accommodation Sub Group will be formed to complete this action for the group.

Training Needs Analysis: A Training needs analysis is being circulated for completion by all clinicians.

Mapping: The Mapping of WTE’s (Whole Time Equivalents) in the area has been updated and a 3% in headcount decrease from April to May 2014 has been noted. The mapping remains a snapshot in time however the gradual decrease in WTE’s requires urgent attention.

Model of Service & Framework Document The Model of Service and Principles are being incorporated in the overall governance framework document. A Preliminary draft Framework Document is being reviewed by the group following which a draft will be circulated within the region for comment.

Implementation Plan: The implementation plan has been drafted and updated.

Communication Strategy: A South of Dublin Region Wide Information Day for Clinicians is scheduled for 25th June – This day will be opportunity for clinicians to be updated on the progress regarding reconfiguration. Clinicians will get an opportunity to feedback and will be invited to make nominations for various sub groups thereafter. E.g.: PPPG’s, Training/ Up-skilling, Accommodation Working Groups etc.

If you have any queries please contact your South of Dublin Region Interim Governance Group Lead or the chair of the SDR bernie.nyhan@hse.ie
**HSE change hub**

This is the HSE’s Learning and Development website which is open for all to enrol, not just HSE staff.

There is a wealth of information and written material of interest on this site, including the Progressing Disability Services for Children & Young People programme.

To search for information on this programme, click on Practice Development Hubs, then click on the Change Hub. Under Resources on the left hand side you will see Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People.

You are not able to search for Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People from the main HSEland.ie home page. You must follow the steps above. You will find key documents such as The Final Report from the Standards and Performance Reporting working group - Outcomes for Children and Their Families and guidelines as they are issued, plus an extensive library of existing service documents and relevant articles.

Don’t forget to visit the site for updated documentation.

**Midwest**

Check out the Midwest Children’s Disability Services website—www.mwcds.ie.

The site contains useful information for professionals and parents on Early Intervention and School Age Disability Teams in the Mid West Region.

Referrers and parents can use the website to access information on the services provided, including contact details for teams, information on the geographical areas and schools served by each team, details of access criteria and referral forms.

The website also provides links to other services which may be of interest.