



An Roinn Sláinte  
Department of Health

# Disability Action Plan Framework

Review of Disability Social Care  
Demand and Capacity  
Requirements to 2032

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## Review of Disability Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032

### Building capacity in specialist disability social care

Specialist community-based disability services are delivered alongside and complement the general health services. These services are delivered to c.56,000 people with either an intellectual or a physical and sensory disability (c. 29,000 and c.27,000 respectively). This is around 9% of the 635,000 identified in the overall population as having a disability. Services comprise a range of social care interventions including early intervention, multi-disciplinary therapies, habilitation, rehabilitation and behaviour support, staffed supported housing, specialist end of life care, respite/short breaks to support carers, day services and support for community engagement, personal assistance, home help and assistive technology. Access to disability support services is based on need rather than a specific diagnosis.

Underpinned by the obligations in the Disability Act 2005 to include people with disabilities in mainstream services, and in line with HSE guidance, general health and social care teams deliver services that are accessible to all people with disabilities.

In line with the Sláintecare approach, population planning provides an opportunity to prioritise and design national and regional health and social care services in line with projected need, to support the delivery of the right care, in the right place, at the right time, compliant with HIQA standards and within available resources.

In order to inform longer term planning for specialist disability services, the Department of Health, in collaboration with the National Disability Authority and the Health Research Board, has completed a 10-year forecasting exercise identifying future need for disability social care services. A needs-based population planning approach, reflecting the social care and therapy needs of those within our population who require specialist disability services, based on demographic considerations was taken. In addition, current levels of service provision, unmet need, and service reform including alternative service options, were taken into account.

The *Review of Disability Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032* quantifies the projected level of future need for specialist disability social care services under different scenarios, based on forecasts of the changing size and age-structure of the population who need these services, and of estimated levels of unmet needs. It measures the scale and range of the capacity required in order to meet requirements for disability support services between now and 2032. It offers options to respond to the growing need in a planned, structured, effective, and efficient manner which will meet the needs of those with a disability requiring specialist social care services.

The 2020 Programme for Government has committed to work towards implementing the *Review of Disability Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032*.

A multi-annual planning framework is needed to address future needs arising from demographic change, and to tackle acknowledged service deficits as set out in that report. Such a multi-annual approach, along with multi-annual capital funding, has underpinned continued delivery of the programme to close our remaining disability institutions and provide residents with alternative community-based housing. Planning ahead is also key to delivering the residential care places we

will need for our ageing population with a disability, where we will need them, in a cost-effective way. We need to align programmes in our colleges to ensure that we have trained the skilled therapy workforce we will need in future years. This Disability Action Plan Framework outlines the key elements that will form the basis for detailed multi-annual planning for the years ahead.

## **A strong start to delivery**

This Government's commitments to people with disabilities can be seen in the record overall funding of €2.2bn in 2021 for HSE-funded disability support services, an increase of €179m or almost 9% on disability spending in 2020. Specific areas where we have already delivered include:

- 126 individuals moved from congregated disability settings to homes in the community in 2020
- Funding is in place in 2021 for a total of 102 new residential places, encompassing planned and emergency placements, and the 18 transfers from nursing homes; as well as 144 replacement places in the community for people now living in congregated disability settings
- Over 80% of the backlog in Assessments of Need for children overdue in June 2020, were cleared by end April 2021, and continuing progress on elimination, following provision of €7.8m in September 2020 to tackle this long-standing issue
- The first programme to tackle the issue of people with disabilities inappropriately placed in nursing homes commenced, with 18 moves due to take place in 2021 on a pilot basis, gathering the learning to inform further stages; a full mapping and consultation exercise of under-65s in nursing homes being undertaken; and a new steering group and project lead established by HSE to drive this priority work programme
- Full complement of Children's Disability Network Teams in place by end summer 2021
- Significant progress made on recruitment of 100 Children's therapy posts
- An additional 85 therapy posts are being provided to strengthen Children's Disability Network Teams. This will allow existing posts in special schools to become part of the local Children's Disability Network Teams where they will receive their clinical governance and supervision while therapists will be assigned to provide in-reach therapy to the special school.
- Additional day service places have been provided, with the outcome that in 2020 over 1,300 school leavers commenced their new day service, and funding is in place 2021 to achieve 1,700 school leavers placed in day services in 2021
- 9 new respite houses will be provided during 2021, providing some 10,400 additional respite nights in a full year. Alternative respite including summer camps, clubs and day respite is also being provided to support families
- 358 intensive support packages in 2021 for children and young adults, an increase of 214 packages or around 50% on the number provided in 2020
- 1.78 million Personal Assistance hours delivered in 2020 to 2,552 people, an increase of 6.7% over the national Service Plan target, with funding in place for an additional 40,000 Personal Assistant hours in 2021
- The Personalised Budget Pilot Project is underway, and is being evaluated, with the learning to inform the path forward in this area

- Funding of €2.29m allocated in 2021, to support the introduction of a managed clinical rehabilitation network demonstrator project, and advance implementation of the community rehabilitation recommendations of the National Neuro-rehabilitation Strategy. The focus of the demonstrator project is the development of post-acute and community neuro-rehabilitation services across CHO 6 & 7. This involves the development of community neuro-rehabilitation teams in Community Healthcare East and Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow Community Healthcare and the development of 10 specialist inpatient beds in Peamount Healthcare
- €20m in once-off funding secured in 2020 for voluntary service providers to enhance the lives of service users and progress the *Transforming Lives* reform programme. This is building providers' capacity to deliver person-centred services; enhancing the environment for service users through measures like improvements to disability housing, or installation of sensory gardens; and provision of assistive technology for service users

### **Covid-19 response**

- **Response to Covid:** A strong response to Covid-19 was put in place, through provision of PPE, detailed training and guidance, and Covid-19 response teams, and close partnership working arrangements between HSE, HIQA, disability service providers and disability representative organisations, to deliver effective infection prevention and control, and to respond to any outbreaks that arose
- **Majority of services remained Covid-free:** From the start of the pandemic in March 2020, it is estimated that over three quarters of disability residential services, encompassing around 85% of residents, experienced no outbreaks. With the roll-out of the vaccination programme in spring 2021, outbreaks in disability services have virtually ceased
- Ireland's guidance programme and Easy to Read materials we developed to support people with intellectual disabilities to give informed consent to vaccination has now been adopted as a model by many US States for their Developmental Disability programmes
- The Government has designated disability services as essential services through all levels of the Living with Covid Framework.
- **Vaccination:** Vaccination of disability residential and day service users was successfully undertaken during spring 2021, and a vaccination outreach programme was also undertaken to people with disabilities receiving home support or personal assistance, those with complex disabilities/medical conditions that put them at high risk of Covid, and to people with Down Syndrome (including 16/17 year olds) who did not attend disability services.
- **Residential care:** Disability Residential services have continued throughout the pandemic
- **Day services:** While disability day services were disrupted due the pandemic, 5,000 day service users in residential placements continued to receive a full service. When disability day services were suspended in March 2020, resources were pivoted to provide alternative channels for service users through home support, and remote support. Additional funding of €30m was put in place to support resumption of services and provision of alternative home-based or remote supports. Day services resumed from late August last year, albeit with reduced capacity due to the physical limitations of buildings, and social distancing requirements. Extra funding was provided to acquire additional physical capacity and to provide extra staff, to ensure that maximum quantum of services continue at a scale that can be provided safely to those most in need for the duration of the pandemic. Wherever families are uncomfortable with allowing their family member to return to a day service

location, a package of support, within available resources, is agreed with the service user and family. The overall national quantum of service being provided at service locations has increased from **39%** at the end of September to **51%** at the end of November. This increase has been augmented by an increase in remote supports due to the investment in technology, and to service users' preferences not to attend locations due to Level 5 COVID-19 restrictions. It is estimated that total provision is currently at around 60% of pre-Covid levels.

- **Children's disability services:** The HSE and its funded disability partners continued to provide therapeutic supports for children with complex disabilities in line with public health guidance and direction and having regard to the availability of staffing resources. While many services were stood down for a time in March 2020, throughout the pandemic, services continued to be provided on the phone/online and also, face to face for some children and families with high prioritised needs, taking all of the required infection control precautions. Assessments of Need and therapeutic interventions resumed on line and in person with public health guidance, and as staff temporarily deployed to testing services were redeployed back into disability services
- **Respite:** Around 50% of our disability respite services remained open since the beginning of the pandemic, while others were temporarily re-purposed as isolation facilities. A three-phase approach is now in place where services have begun to re-open since July, and will continue to do so in the coming months.

## Framework for action

Taking a multi-year planning approach, this document sets out the framework for the first phase of implementation of the *Review of Disability Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032* over a three-year timeframe.

## Policy context

Ireland has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which commits us to action to promote the equal citizenship and human rights of people with disabilities. The Government's commitment to improve access, services and supports for people with disabilities and their families is set out in the Programme for Government which sets out a comprehensive suite of actions for disability service developments.

The *Transforming Lives* reform programme is a national collaborative effort, providing the overarching policy direction to improve the quality of life of those people with a disability in receipt of our services. Transforming traditional services to a person-centred model which supports individuals to live lives of their choosing, through supports that are tailored to their needs, is the cornerstone of this approach. This programme is built on the principles and values of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, especially Article 19. Building on extensive and ongoing consultation with people with disabilities, their families and representative organisations, it implements national policy as set out in three key reports:

- *Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (2009)* – delivery of children's therapy services through area-based teams;
- *New Directions – Report of the National Working Group for the Review of Health Service Funded Adult Day Services (2012)* – supporting people with disabilities to engage in activities of their choice in the community;

- *Time to Move on from Congregated Settings (2011)* – progressive replacement of institutions and residential campuses with ordinary community-based supported housing.

## **Disability Action Plan Framework 2022-25**

Sláintecare commits to providing the right service, in the right place, at the right time, and the *Review of Disability Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032* was developed as a Sláintecare action item.

While the *Review* provides invaluable population forecasting data as well as quantifying current unmet need, the next step is to analyse and utilise this resource to build the required multi-year service capacity in a planned and structured manner to maximise effectiveness and value for resources invested to meet the needs of those who use our services.

The *Review* recognised that it will take multi-annual planning to deliver a sustained expansion in the capacity of disability services to meet the scale of needs identified, and to ensure the right services are in place at the right time for our changing population.

A detailed three-year Action Plan covering 2022-25 is being developed in line with this *Disability Action Plan Framework* taking account of a post-Covid-19 environment, and in the context of longer-term planning as set out in the *Review of Disability Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032*. Work will be delivered through an interdepartmental Working Group, representing the key Departments and the HSE, and reporting to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Equality, and will be completed by December 2021. This will be a whole of Government delivery plan involving a number of government departments and agencies, that will plan and co-ordinate:

- provision of additional disability housing capacity, with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage playing a pivotal role in delivery
- strategic workforce planning including preparation for required third level training places for the mix of skills and therapy disciplines, with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science playing a key role in ensuring targets are achieved
- delivery of additional services where they are most needed.

Preparation of the Action Plan includes

- A consultation exercise with people with disabilities
- Analysis of the best geographic spread for new developments, drawing on standardised assessments; the location of current facilities and supports, and any gaps; transport links; and equitable deployment of resources where needs are most urgent
- Co-ordination of housing provision and HSE-funded residential care supports
- A policy review and consultation exercise in relation to respite provision, to ensure resources are deployed in a cost-effective way where they will deliver most impact for the funding involved
- Consideration of the strategic options outlined in the Disability Capacity Review, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of intensive support packages for vulnerable individuals and families, of alternative support options for school-leavers; and strengthening of early intervention
- Workforce planning and key skills requirements

- Detailed consideration of a multi-annual funding package.
- An assessment of the role of other Departments in supporting the delivery of HSE-funded disability services.

## Government’s immediate priorities

Building on Government investment in priority areas in 2021, and the continued improvements being considered in the Estimates 2022 process, the *Action Plan* will identify proposed strategic investment areas and associated key deliverables, to be achieved initially over a three year time frame, that will provide access for people with a disability to the right services at the right time, enabling them to reach their potential, and play an active role in their own community. While detailed year-by-year allocations are usually decided at Estimates time within the prevailing fiscal context, the Action Plan will set out indicative budgetary allocations year-by-year in order to guide detailed planning of the resources of staffing and premises for which there is always a lead-in time, and to identify what level of provision is required to maintain existing levels of service in the light of demographic developments, as well as a making steady inroads on backlogs of unmet need. In that context, priority will be given to setting out indicative funding envelopes over the next three years for therapy, respite, personal assistance, and transfers from nursing homes.

This *Disability Action Plan Framework* sets out the following overarching priority areas which will need to be considered in detail as part of the Action Plan:

<b>Children’s Services:</b>
<b>Policy:</b> <i>Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme (2009)</i>
<b>Service description:</b> The HSE is implementing the <i>Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme</i> which requires a reconfiguration of HSE and HSE funded voluntary organisations children’s disability services into 91 geographically based Children’s Disability Networks, providing services for children aged from birth to 18. These teams are being established to ensure equitable access to services and supports for all children. The Assessment of Need process is being improved through the continued implementation of a new Standard Operating Procedure along with dedicated funding to eliminate the existing backlog. These combined measures are intended to greatly improve access to therapeutic interventions and assessment for all children with additional needs. Autism services are also being further developed through the <i>Autism Plan (2019)</i> which includes measures around awareness raising and information provision as well as improvements in the assessment process.
<b>Approach:</b> Access to early intervention and children’s therapy services are key to maximising an individuals’ capacity. Provision of sufficient early intervention services, and adequate access to therapeutic supports including mental health services, psychology, behaviour support, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, nursing, and social work supports for families, alongside specific targeting of those at most risk through the development of specialist services where required, play a role in preventing and mitigating serious emerging challenges particularly among young people.
<b>Action Plan 2022-25 priority focus:</b> Maintaining a continued focus on access to early intervention and support, embedding the multi-disciplinary model and inclusive area-based services of the Children’s Network Disability Teams, and links to Primary Care teams. Collaborative work with the third level education authorities on the provision of required additional training places in the different therapy disciplines.

### **Intensive support packages for young people with disabilities experiencing severe distress**

**Policy:** New policy development

**Service description:** There are a number of mainly young people with complex disabilities, who experience frequent episodes of severe distress giving rise to challenging behaviours. Traditionally, the only option available has been, through an emergency measure, to provide a long-term residential place, at times not adjacent to their family and community. Our intent is to support these young people and their families so they can remain living with their family and in their own community for as long as possible.

**Approach:** In 2020, 144 individualised specialist intensive support packages were provided through the HSE. As part of the COVID-19 response, an additional 214 temporary support packages are available in 2021 bringing the total available packages to 358 in 2021. These tailored person-centred packages include behaviour support, additional overnight respite breaks, and in-home supports.

**Action Plan 2022-25 priority focus:** The *Action Plan* will build on an evaluation of the impact and deliverables from this initiative to date, as well as the feedback from families who were supported, to establish the role this alternative model can play as a substitute to crisis emergency residential placements, and consider the appropriate scale.

### **Day Service places for school-leavers**

**Policy:** *New Directions - Day services for adults with disabilities (2012)*

**Service description:** Day services for adults with disabilities are long-term programmes with typically lifelong participation (18 to 70+), where the mix of activities and supports can change over the person's lifecycle. Day services delivered in line with the *New Directions* policy provide for a range of skills and activities such as independent living skills, personal development, education classes, social and recreational activities, and health-related and therapy supports. In general, people enter adult day services on leaving school, or after an initial period in Rehabilitative Training. In addition, a number enter these services following the onset of a disability during adult life.

**Approach:** Since 2015, an additional c.1,000 new day service places per year have been required to provide for the number of people entering day services for whom no vacancies were available. In 2021, the State has provided €17.4m for new day service places for this year's school leavers (€35m full year costs).

**Action Plan 2022-25 priority focus:** The number of school leavers who need day service places is set to continue to grow, and to outpace the number of annual vacancies arising. The *Action Plan* will therefore identify the quantity of new places required for 2022-2025, and will plan for the provision of additional community hubs to provide additional day services. The *Action Plan* will also build on the learning from the provision of a mix of remote and technology-enabled supports, and home-based supports, during Covid-19, and research findings on service user preferences for a mixture of own time and supported activities, including employment opportunities.

### **Personal assistance and home supports**

**Policy:** Personal Assistance Services are accessed through an application process or through referrals from public health nurses or other community-based staff. The level of support funded is determined by the needs of the individual, compliance with prioritisation criteria, and the level of resources available.

**Service description:** Personal Assistance, Home Support Services, and community support services provided by disability organisations specialising in specific conditions, all play an important role in supporting people, particularly those with physical, sensory or neurological disabilities, to manage their condition and live as independently as possible.

**Approach:** Funding was secured for additional 40,000 Personal Assistance hours in 2020, and a further increase of 40,000 support hours in 2021.

**Action Plan 2022-25 priority focus:** A detailed examination of potential further improvements that can be delivered 2022-2025 under the *Action Plan*, in the light of the principles of Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the philosophy of independent living.

#### **Respite services, including alternative respite**

**Policy:** *Transforming Lives programme (2014)*

**Service description:** Respite has a key role in supporting family carers, and in enhancing service users' lives. Respite can be in the form of overnight breaks, extended day service or clubs/activities.

**Approach:** An increase in capacity in 2018-19 provided an additional 12 respite houses, and a further increase of 9 respite houses is being funded in 2021, along with further development of alternative models of respite.

**Action Plan 2022-25 priority focus:** The *Review of Disability Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032* identified that most family carers of adults with an intellectual disability do not have access to respite. A policy analysis of respite provision will be undertaken, along with a consultation exercise with families and service users to identify how to maximise the value to families of the funding devoted to respite services. The *Action Plan* will detail the mix of overnight and alternative respite that will be provided in the period 2022-25, and will aim to maximise the impact and reach of these services.

#### **Additional residential care places in the community**

**Policy:** *Time to Move on from Congregated Settings* and the *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (2011)*

**Service description:** In excess of 8,100 residential places for people with a disability are currently provided, with over 90% of them provided for people with an intellectual disability. Of these, 6,300 people access care through supported housing in the community for a group of four to six people. There are around 2,000 people living in residential institutions or campuses which are scheduled to close in line with the policy of supporting people with disabilities to live in the community. 120 people completed their move from institutional style or campus-based accommodation to new homes in the community during 2020, and 144 people are scheduled to move during 2021.

In addition, there are around 1,300 people aged under 65 living in nursing homes, many of whom may be individuals with disabilities who would prefer to be supported to live independently or in an alternative care setting, as described in the Ombudsman's report 'Wasted Lives'. There are also people with acquired disabilities whose discharge from acute settings or in-patient rehabilitation is delayed because of a lack of appropriate supports to live at home.

Every year, there are unpredicted emergency needs for residential care, for example if a younger carer parent dies suddenly, and reserve capacity needs to be part of forward

planning. In 2021, funding has been provided for a total of 102 additional residential places (including planned and emergency places and transfers from nursing homes).

**Action Plan 2022-25 priority focus:** Alongside planned provision of places for people living with older parents, and continuation of the programme of moving people from congregated disability settings to the community, the Government will also prioritise action to support alternatives to nursing homes for people with disabilities who do not choose to live there, building on the learning of the pilot programme of transfers from these settings being undertaken in 2021, and of the findings of the mapping and consultation exercise now being conducted. Co-ordinated action by different sectors in the health system is needed to prevent further inflow to inappropriate placements, and enable support to be given in people's own homes, or in supported disability housing.

Providing additional residential service capacity represents a major financial, procurement, planning and logistical challenge involving disability services and the local authorities. User representatives will play their role in the development of the *National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities* to reflect the views and wishes of service user and their families. The Minister of State with responsibility for Disability Services will work with the Minister for Housing, Local Authorities, and HSE to ensure the availability of sufficient suitable and appropriately-located housing in the community that meet the rigorous standards required for disability housing. This co-ordinated action on housing will be a key element of the *2022-25 Action Plan*.

### **Detailed Action Plan by December 2021**

Work will begin immediately to develop the detailed planning to deliver a sustained expansion in the capacity of disability services to meet the scale of needs identified, and to ensure the right services are put in place under each of these priority areas. This work programme will determine the optimum service mix so that individuals get the right support at the right time, compliant with HIQA standards and within available resources. It is intended that the detailed *2022-25 Action Plan*, under the guidance of the Cabinet subcommittee on Equality and Social Policy, will be complete by December 2021, it will incorporate decisions made in the 2022 Estimates, and will inform planning for the 2023-5 Estimates and HSE National Service Plan processes.

## Appendix

### 2021 disability service investment

The additional €100 million new development funding for specialist disability services provided by the Government in Budget 2021 represents a significant investment in supporting people with disabilities (table 1), bringing the total disabilities budget to around €2.2 billion. It is the first step in addressing the challenges set out in the *Review of Disability Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032* and in delivering on the Programme for Government commitments.

**Table 1: Allocation of additional disability funding 2021**

Service Area	Funding Description	Funding
Additional residential places	102 additional residential places: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44 emergency places</li> <li>• 36 planned places</li> <li>• 18 Nursing Home transitions of under 65s</li> <li>• 4 transitions from Túsła to adult services</li> </ul>	€15m
Intensive in-home support packages	358 packages including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 144 intensive in-home support packages to support children and young adults</li> <li>• 214 additional intensive in-home support packages to children and young adults in specific response to COVID-19</li> </ul>	€6m
Additional Personal Assistant hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40,000 additional Personal Assistant hours</li> <li>• 1.74m hours in total in 2021</li> </ul>	€0.6m
New housing development to support de-congregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 144 further transitions from congregated to community-based settings in 2021</li> <li>• Acquisition of 30 new houses to support de-congregation over 2021 (capital funding provided separately)</li> </ul>	€4.1m
Additional school leaver places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,700 additional school leaver places for cohort leaving school in 2021</li> </ul>	€17.4m
Multi-disciplinary posts within Children's Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100 additional multi-disciplinary posts within children's network teams, to improve assessment of need and therapeutic intervention</li> </ul>	€5.2m
Joint HSE/Túsła Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement joint HSE and Túsła interagency protocol</li> <li>• Co-funding of 33 children's placements in 2021</li> </ul>	€4.2m
Increased Day Service Support	Continuity of services during Covid-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect full-time day service support for 5,000 people that receive both day and residential services</li> <li>• Increase the level of day service provision for 14,500 day attenders from 40% (equivalent to 2 days per week) to 60% (equivalent to 3 days per week) on average</li> </ul>	€30m

Service Area	Funding Description	Funding
Additional Respite Houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9 additional respite houses, providing some 10,400 additional respite nights and alternative respite in a full year</li> </ul>	€5m
Pay Restoration for Section 39 Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€10m held back for pay restoration funding for Section 39 organisations</li> </ul>	€10m
Disability Integration Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€2.5 for a disability integration fund</li> </ul>	€2.5m
<b>Total Funding</b>		<b>€100m</b>