



**Bulletin June 2011**

## **Keeping you informed about this national programme for the restructuring of children's disability services**

***If your child has a disability, getting access to the services you need shouldn't depend on where you live or the nature of your child's disability.***

### ***What is this programme about?***

In Ireland disability services, delivered by the HSE and non-statutory organisations, have developed independently over time, so there is wide variation in the services available in different parts of the country and for different categories of disability. As a consequence of this 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 we must work together to achieve the greatest benefit possible within our resources.**

A national programme has been launched which will change 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* produced by representatives of the professions and management involved in delivering multi-disciplinary services to children and available to read on the HSE website [http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find\\_a\\_Service/Disability\\_Services/](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/Disability_Services/)

### ***How will services be organised in the future?***

Many children with delays in development will be able to have their needs met by their local

primary care services (GP, Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist, Public Health Nurse etc), but we also need early intervention and school age disability teams to provide a more specialised service for children who require it.

These disability teams will be looking after children with a wide range of difficulties, so they will be supported by specialist services in fields requiring a high level of expertise, for example high-tech assistive technology and programmes for managing challenging behaviour. The specialist service providers will be involved in consultation and training for health professionals as well as providing direct intervention with children when needed.

Health services, parents and schools will have to develop closer working relationships so that, together, they can ensure that children with disabilities make the most of their education.

**The national programme aims to have *one clear pathway for all children with disabilities* living in a locality. This means that health professionals and parents will know where a child should be referred and how to do this. Importantly, via local service provision, the objective is that no family will be left without a service.**

### ***How will this be achieved?***

A National Co-ordinating Group has been meeting for the past twelve months and forming a project plan, with guidance and direction to assist all the local areas to achieve a consistent approach throughout the country. Each region has an identified lead person to work on this programme.

Representatives from services and parents will be brought together in each area by local leads for the programme, to see how current services can be reorganised to achieve this improved structure. This will include looking at what is currently available for children with disabilities, planning how best to use these resources and making sure throughout that there is good consultation and communication.

### **Regional Leads**

**South** (Kerry, Cork, Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary)

**Suzanne Moloney** [suzanner.moloney@hse.ie](mailto:suzanner.moloney@hse.ie)

**West** (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, West Cavan, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, North Tipperary)

**Catherine Cunningham**

[catherine.cunningham2@hse.ie](mailto:catherine.cunningham2@hse.ie)

**Dublin Mid Leinster** (Dublin south of the Liffey, Wicklow, Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath)

**Bernie Nyhan** [bernie.nyhan@hse.ie](mailto:bernie.nyhan@hse.ie)

**Dublin North East** (Dublin north of the Liffey, Meath, Louth, Cavan, Monaghan)

**Anne Melly** [anne.melly@hse.ie](mailto:anne.melly@hse.ie)

**If you would like to put your name forward as a parent representative on a local implementation group please contact your Regional Lead.**

**We will be holding public information sessions about this programme aimed at parents and service users in September 2011.**

### ***How do we know this will work?***

Agencies in some areas of the country have already reconfigured to provide a unified way of delivering 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 services. Here are some of the comments from parents with children attending the Limerick Children's Services where there are now teams who each provide services for all children within a geographic area:

*"A change in St Gabriel's occurred where the under 6s and over 6s broke into two different teams. Now my two boys were in two different groups. At first I was anxious about this change as both boys had attended the same physio but this turned out to be a great change."*

*"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"*

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"*

### **The vision for the programme**

***One clear pathway to services for all children with disabilities according to need***

***Resources used to the greatest benefit for all children and families  
Health and education working together to support children to achieve their potential***

Limited resources are of course an issue and it may take a long time to achieve a comprehensive service structure throughout the country. However, if we have the vision of where we want to be, we can put the pieces in place according to this picture until we accomplish the whole.

*More about this programme can be found on the HSE Learning and Development website [www.hseland.ie](http://www.hseland.ie). You can log in / enrol (you don't have to be a member of HSE staff) and then click on the Change Hub (down the page) and select Progressing Children's Disability Services from the Reconfiguration section (on the top line).*

**We have a dedicated email address for queries and comments from parents and service users, health and education staff about the programme:**

**[info.childrendisabilityservices@hse.ie](mailto:info.childrendisabilityservices@hse.ie)**

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Programme partner organisations: Health Service Executive; Office for Disability & Mental Health Department of Health; Department of Education and Skills; National Federation of Voluntary Bodies; Disability Federation of Ireland; Not for Profit Business Association; Non-statutory service providers