

Children's Hospital Group (CHG)
Opening Statement – Future Committee on Healthcare - 16th Nov 2016

Chairman and Deputies

Thank you for inviting the Children's Hospital Group to attend your committee to outline plans for children's healthcare. I'm joined by Dr Ciara Martin, Clinical Director.

The Children's Hospital Group consists of Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin; Temple Street Children's University Hospital and the National Children's Hospital at Tallaght Hospital. Academic arrangements exist with all universities providing paediatric education and research. Collectively, these three hospitals currently have 443 beds and 2,865 whole time staff delivering services to 25,000 inpatients, 27,800 day cases, over 153,000 outpatients and 118,000 emergency department attendances. All national paediatric specialities are in the Group, some with an all-island remit. We have specific access and capacity challenges for some paediatric services but, in general, the three children's hospitals and their staff are held in high regard for the services they deliver despite these challenges.

23% of our population are children under 16 years of age. The majority are healthy, but 1/4 of three year olds are obese, 16% of our children have a chronic disease, such as, diabetes, allergies and asthma and this is increasing. 2% are acutely ill or have complex care needs. Currently, there is an over reliance on hospital based care, with many services accommodated in not fit-for-purpose facilities.

The plan for children's healthcare is the Integrated Programme for Child Health, involving acute paediatrics, social, community, primary care and mental health services. This cross divisional programme rightly reflects a population-focused, integrated and multidisciplinary approach to children's healthcare and the resources required to best support parents, families, children and young people in achieving healthier outcomes and will take 10 years to implement.

The plan for the acute paediatric services element of this Integrated Programme is the National Model of Care for Paediatrics and Neonatology, developed through extensive engagement with parents' representatives, GP's, community colleagues and hospital staff in all acute paediatric and neonatal services. This plan outlines where and how acute paediatric services are best provided across the health system, with the new children's hospital designated as the central component of an integrated clinical network for acute paediatrics. The primary principle of this network is to conveniently deliver most paediatric services locally, with regional units clearly identified and supported from the centre and all highly specialised and national services consolidated in one children's hospital. Multiple health policy reports exist to support this service configuration for contemporary and sustainable paediatric services, and reflect how acute hospital services are developing in other countries.

The 12 member Children's Hospital Group Board, chaired by Dr James Browne, was established in Aug 2013 as an administrative board with specific remits to integrate the three children's hospitals, develop a single clinical and corporate governance for paediatric services and act as client for the new children's hospital capital project and ICT programme - collectively referred to as the Children's Hospital Programme.

The three independently governed children's hospitals in the group have voluntarily agreed to merge into a new single legal entity before transitioning to the new facilities. The Minister plans to bring primary legislation for enactment in 2017 to establish this single entity and the Children's Hospital Group Board.

The Children's Hospital Programme will successfully merge these three hospitals into a new single organisation. It needs to transform general paediatric and emergency care in the greater Dublin area with the opening of the new Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centres at Tallaght and Connolly Hospitals in 2018, implement an integrated clinical network for paediatrics across the health system, move services into the new children's hospital by mid-2021 - the largest capital investment in the public system. In line with the Government's Digital First Public Service ICT Strategy, the new hospital is planned as the first 'Digital Hospital' in the system with the implementation of an Electronic Healthcare Record, as well as, other evidence based standards, such as, 100% single rooms.

A decade after the first health policy position on acute paediatric services - the McKinsey Report (2006) - last April An Bord Pleanála granted planning permission for the new children's hospital to be built on a campus shared with St. James's Hospital, as well as, the new Paediatric Outpatient and urgent Care Centres at Tallaght and Connolly Hospitals. The new hospital will provide national paediatric tertiary services (22% of activity), as well as, secondary paediatric care for children in the greater Dublin area (78% of activity).

In summary, the Children's Hospital Group's 10 year vision for acute children's healthcare is:

- The establishment of a national children's health organisation that put children's health first and foremost in its decision making
- An Integrated Programme for Child Health, with the new children's hospital central to a clinical network of acute paediatric services in regional and local units and by using technology, out to GPs and into children's homes
- The re-configuration of paediatric service within other Hospital Groups to reflect the paediatric population served, keeping appropriate services local and supported by outreach from the new children's hospital
- A 24 hour National Paediatric and Neonatal Retrieval Transport Service to ensure timely transfer of the sickest babies & children to the most appropriate hospital
- The successful integration of the three children's hospitals into a state-of-the-art Digital Hospital, providing both national specialists services and a local paediatric service to the greater Dublin area that our valued staff are proud to work in
- Progress a paediatric academic health sciences network with academic partners and industry to enhance paediatric education, research and innovation.

These developments – which will positively impact one quarter of our population - need to be considered not just in how they will enhance health care for children, but how this integrated plan for acute paediatrics can demonstrate that the Irish health system can be reformed to deliver better, safer and more sustainable healthcare.

Thank you to the members of the Committee for your attention and I am happy to take any questions that you might have.