

Children's Health Ireland
Opening Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health

Wednesday 12th June 2019

Chairman and Deputies

Introduction

Thank you for inviting Children's Health Ireland to attend your committee to update you on the new children's hospital. I am joined today by Prof Jim Browne, Chairman, Children's Health Ireland Board.

I welcome the opportunity to provide this Committee with an update on the new children's hospital project as requested in your invitation. Children's Health Ireland is the client to the Development Board on this project so my update to the Committee is in accordance with this remit.

As you are aware Children's Health Ireland commenced on 1 January 2019 as the entity that governs and delivers acute paediatric services currently at Crumlin, Temple Street and Tallaght and from July at Connolly Hospital in Blanchardstown.

This commencement was facilitated by the support of the Boards and management of Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin and Temple Street Children's University Hospital both of which dissolved this month. I would like to take this opportunity to thank these former two Boards and the existing Board at Tallaght University Hospital as well as the previous Children's Hospital Group Board for their stewardship of acute paediatric services for many decades and in some cases - for centuries.

In terms of the delivery of the physical buildings, Children's Health Ireland continues to work closely with the Development Board on matters relating to the build, design and equipping of these new facilities. A series of management and working groups engage on a monthly basis to progress all matters related to ensuring that the paediatric outpatient and urgent care centres at Connolly and Tallaght and the new children's hospitals meet the clinical and operational needs of the children, their families and our staff.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the phenomenal commitment, work and support of John Pollock, former Project Director of the Development Board.

Within a matter of weeks, we will be delivering a service at the paediatric outpatient and urgent care centre at Children's Health Ireland at Connolly in Blanchardstown and this will be followed next year with the paediatric outpatient and urgent care centre at Children's Health Ireland at Tallaght. These new facilities together with the opening of the new children's hospital in 2023, will transform how acute paediatric healthcare is delivered to the sickest children in Ireland and how local secondary care is delivered in the Greater Dublin Area – delivering better healthcare outcomes as well as better experiences for children, families and staff.

Children's Health Ireland at Connolly in Blanchardstown was handed over by the Development Board to Children's Health Ireland for clinical commissioning in May. Equipment installation is near completion and operational and clinical commissioning is currently underway in time for opening on 31 July 2019, initially on a phased basis.

The Transformation of Services

25% of our population are children under 18 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 with 2% who are acutely ill or have very complex care needs. Currently, there is an over reliance on hospital based in-patient care, with many services accommodated in facilities that are not fit for purpose. The new children's 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).

Currently, there are 442 beds and 3,388 whole time staff delivering services to 25,000 inpatients, 28,700 day cases, over 145,000 outpatients and 120,000 emergency department attendances in the three children's hospitals. All national paediatric specialities are also under the remit of Children's Health Ireland, some with an all-island remit for example, the All-Island Congenital Heart Disease Network.

The plan for children's healthcare is outlined in the Integrated Programme for Child Health, involving acute paediatrics, social, community, primary care and child and adolescent mental health services. This cross divisional programme rightly reflects a population-focused, integrated and interdisciplinary approach to children's healthcare and identifies the resources required to best support parents/guardians, families, children and young people in achieving healthier outcomes.

Integration

Our integration programme is focused on our staff in Children's Health Ireland, on valuing and aligning different cultures, on integrating our ICT systems, standardising clinical and operational protocols, staff recruitment and training. There is significant work underway across CHI and I would like to take the opportunity today to update you all on some of these;

Implementation of single Patient Administration (PAS)

As part of Children's Health Ireland's path to integrating our ICT systems, a new Patient Administration System was implemented and went live in mid-April at Crumlin and Temple Street. It will allow Children's Health Ireland healthcare professionals working in both hospitals, and in Connolly when it opens, to view shared patient details including inpatient and outpatient history, referrals and waiting list details, transfers and chart tracking. This means patients will have a single Children's Health Ireland unique identifier across Crumlin and Temple Street and Connolly when open. It is a very tangible and valuable result of the early part of our integration work to support shared and common OPD waiting lists starting with General Paediatrics.

Staffing – Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre at Connolly

The majority of recruitment for the Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre at Connolly is well advanced, with most doctors, nurses, health and social care professional and administrative staff recruited and they have start dates over the forthcoming weeks/months. We will start to treat patients from 31 July 2019.

Children's Health Ireland at Connolly in Blanchardstown will provide a range of services including urgent care with a short stay observation unit, where children are observed and treated for up to 8 hours before being discharged with a very small number requiring admission to one of our hospitals. It will also have outpatient care, including general paediatrics and orthopaedic fracture clinics. Other specialities will follow.

When open, Children's Health Ireland at Connolly in Blanchardstown will create additional capacity for General Paediatrics and will contribute to significant reductions in waiting times for children and their families.

Children's Health Ireland at Connolly in Blanchardstown represents a significant transformation of services for families and children. It will facilitate the delivery of a new model of care in paediatric services in north county Dublin and its environs, delivering the right care, at the right time, in the right facility, as close to the child's home as is possible, as outlined in SlainteCare.

I would welcome the opportunity to bring the members of this Committee on a visit to the Centre ahead of it opening for clinical care so that you can see first-hand this new state of the art facility and the impact it will have on the delivery of care.

Conclusion

Children's Health Ireland is in a period of transition - not just for our staff, who transitioned to a new entity in 2019, but in terms of how acute paediatric services are delivered in Ireland. We believe that the changes we are making, and the impact that they will have, can be used as an exemplar for the transformation of services across the system. The changes we are making will deliver better, safer and more sustainable healthcare for our children, young people, their families and our staff for future generations to come.

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

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