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Houses of the  
Oireachtas**

**An Comhchoiste um Uathachas**  
Tuarascáil maidir leis an gClár Samhraidh, 2023  
Samhain 2022

**Joint Committee on Autism**  
Report on the Summer Programme 2023  
November 2022



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<sup>1</sup> Deputy Marian Harkin was discharged from the Committee at her own request on 8 November 2022

## Chairperson's Foreword



The Joint Committee on Autism was established by order of both Houses of the Oireachtas to consider matters relating to the services and supports provided by the State for autistic people.

The Committee has held ten public meetings thus far, several of which have looked at Autism Policy and Education as a central topic.

The Summer Programme has arisen consistently as a major issue and a source of frustration for autistic people and their families in many of these meetings. Members of the Committee have received correspondence from families across the country who have been impacted severely by the failure of the State to provide the Summer Programme to all those who needed it in 2022.

We have heard powerful contributions from parents' advocacy groups at public meetings of the Committee that were held on 20 September 2022 and 25 October 2022. The representatives of these organisations – themselves the parents of, and the carers to, autistic children - conveyed the unacceptable conditions that they and many other families face when trying to access this service.

They highlighted the urgent need for action to ensure that no autistic child is left without a place in their local area in the Summer Programme 2023.

It is in this time-critical context that the Joint Committee on Autism has passed the resolution below and published this brief resolution report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Micheál Carrigy". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Senator Micheál Carrigy

Chairperson of the Joint Committee on Autism

22 November 2022

## Note on the Use of Language to Refer to Autism

The Committee wishes to highlight its awareness that there is a variety of language used to describe Autism, and that there are preferences for some terminology over others. For many years, Autism has been described in the medical and academic communities as “Autism Spectrum Disorder” (ASD). As such, these terms appear in many studies concerning Autism. Today, many autistic people prefer the term “Autism Spectrum Condition” (ASC), as it better reflects the view that autism is a form of neurodiversity – a condition rather than a medical disorder. It is with this preference in mind that the report will retain the use of “ASD” where it is featured in quotes from academic journals and other evidence, but will otherwise utilise “ASC” throughout the document.

Moreover, some people with ASC prefer to be referred to as “autistic persons”, while others prefer to be described as “persons with autism”. In light of the variety of views on the subject, this report will endeavour to be inclusive in its use of both terms.

Request for a Debate in Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann

The Joint Committee requests that the issues raised in this report,  
and its recommendations,  
be the subject of a debate and action  
in both Houses of the Oireachtas

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## 1. Resolution on the Summer Programme

“That the Joint Committee on Autism

notes the evidence of parents of autistic children and other stakeholders about difficulties with the Summer Programme

and while not having met all the key stakeholders, given the urgency of the current situation, calls on the Minister for Education to:

- ensure that all autistic children will have access to the Summer Programme in 2023;
- ensure that all Special Schools will provide the Summer Programme in 2023;
- provide sufficient resources to schools in order that they may offer a comprehensive provision of the Summer Programme in 2023;
- liaise with the various stakeholders to ensure that increased numbers of schools participate in the Summer Programme, bringing the resources of Schools together where needed, thereby ensuring that a programme is available in every large town in the country
- mitigate any constraints to the provision of the Summer Programme including staffing issues such as delays in payment to teachers and SNAs (Special Needs Assistants), resolve any pay anomalies, and to broaden the potential workforce e.g. OTs (Occupational Therapists), SLTs (Speech and Language Therapists), early childcare workers, and include suitable student placements;
- mitigate any difficulties with Garda vetting to allow staff to move from one school to another school easily.”

*Adopted by the Committee on 25 October 2022*

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. The Joint Committee on Autism has heard from a range of witnesses over ten public sessions, including a joint meeting with the Joint Committee on Disability Matters. The Committee has dealt substantially with the subject of education in its public meetings. The Summer Programme (formerly 'July Provision') has been a central topic of discussion in each of these meetings.
- 2.2. Committee Members have related that parents of autistic children have contacted them to detail the difficulties they experience in securing a place for their children in a local school for the Summer Programme. Committee Members have commented that they are aware of schools, in some instances, stating over 12 months in advance that they will not provide the Summer Programme in 2023.
- 2.3. It is within this context that the Committee has adopted the resolution.

### 3. Origins of the Summer Programme

3.1. The Summer Programme – formerly known as ‘July Provision’ and ‘Summer Provision’ – was established as a four-week programme of education for children with autism and those with profound special educational needs (SEN) throughout the month of July. It emerged from the 1993 High Court ruling in *O’Donoghue v Minister for Health*<sup>2</sup>, in which it was ruled that children with SEN have a right to education and it was established that children with autism and SEN experience regression over the summer months. The Programme sought to mitigate regression for children with SEN and it also served as a form of respite for the parents of these children.

3.2. On 12 June 2020 the then Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Joe McHugh TD and the then Minister for Health, Mr Simon Harris TD and the then Minister of State for Disability Issues, Mr Finian McGrath TD announced “a significantly expanded programme for children with special needs and students in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools.”<sup>3</sup> For the first time, the expanded programme included three strands:

1. An in-school or home-based strand to “help prevent regression among children with special needs.”
2. An opportunity for DEIS schools to provide summer camps.
3. A HSE-led range of summer camps catering for up to 1,200 children with complex needs.

3.3. In 2021, the programme was expanded further. Ms Josepha Madigan TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Special Education and Inclusion, attributed this expansion of the scheme to the then on-going Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup> In her contribution to a public meeting of the Committee on 20 September 2022, Ms Miriam

<sup>2</sup> High Court. *O’Donoghue v. Minister for Health*. 1992 No. 75 J.R. [O’Donoghue v Minister for Health \(vlex.com\)](https://vlex.com)

<sup>3</sup> Available here: [Press Release](#)

<sup>4</sup> Available here: [Parliamentary Question](#)

Jennings of *Special Schools and Classes* states that this resulted in “an increase in eligibility from 15,000 children in 2019 to 80,000 children in 2021.”

3.4. However, in expanding the cohort of pupils eligible for the Summer Programme, parents and Members have related that those for whom the programme was envisaged were no longer able to avail of it.

3.5. As Adam Harris, CEO of *AsIAM*, told the Committee at its public meeting on 12 July 2022:

“[T]here has to be a recognition that those with the highest level of need and those in special schools have been left behind. In next year’s response, there needs to be a targeted approach to make sure that those children are able to access the support they need.”

## 4. Review of the Summer Programme

4.1. The Committee notes that the Minister for Education, Ms Norma Foley TD and the Minister of State with responsibility for Special Education and Inclusion, Ms Josepha Madigan TD, have announced a review of the Summer Programme, along with an allocation of €40 million to its budget in 2023.<sup>5</sup> This amount matches the allocation which was provided in 2022.

4.2. The Committee also notes that a review of the Summer Programme 2021 was undertaken by the Inspectorate at the Department of Education and published in May 2022.<sup>6</sup> The Committee hopes that these reviews will have a positive impact on the provision of the Summer Programme in 2023.

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<sup>5</sup> Available here: [Press Release](#)

<sup>6</sup> Available here: [Inspectorate Report on the Summer Programme 2021](#)

## 5. Key Issues Relating to the Summer Programme

The following key issues have been identified throughout the course of Committee meetings:

- Regression over the summer holiday period
- Strain on carers and families
- Delays in schools confirming participation in the Summer Programme
- The expansion of the cohort to whom the Summer Programme is available and targeting pupils most in need of the service
- Staffing for the Summer Programme
- Incentives for teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs) to participate in the programme
- Time allocation for schools to arrange provision of Summer Programme
- Refusal of schools to provide the Summer Programme
- Funding available for the Summer Programme project
- Allocation of funding to schools for the Summer Programme

## 6. Views and Witness Contributions in respect of the Summer Programme

6.1. The Committee has heard from a range of witnesses in respect of the Summer Programme. Additionally, in a number of instances, Committee Members have related that issues concerning the Summer Programme are frequently raised with them by constituents, members of the public and the parents and guardians of autistic children.

6.2. At a public meeting of the Committee on 20 September 2022, representatives of four parents' advocacy groups addressed the Committee. The groups in attendance were *Autism Support Hub*, *Dublin 12 Campaign for Autism Inclusion*, *Rainbow Club* and *Special Needs Schools and Classes*. Several representatives expressed their frustration at the very fact that they felt duty-bound to address an Oireachtas committee in relation to the issue of autism. Ms Miriam Jennings said "The first thing I would say is that I think everybody here is a very reluctant advocate. We certainly would not choose to be here but we come here because this is our lived experience."

6.3. The representatives of these advocacy groups discussed the Summer Programme at length with the Committee. These representatives raised many of the issues mentioned in the list above. They provided detailed examples of the impact of these issues on their own lives and the lives of other parents.

6.4. In respect of targeting those most in need of the Summer Programme, Ms Jennings continued:

"We believe, however, that our children's need for a school-based summer programme was not safeguarded. No plan was put in place to ensure that complex-needs children, for whom the scheme was set up, would access it. Department of Education figures from 2021 show that 80% of children in special schools had no access to the programme, while less than 5% of the 8,000 children in special schools got the full recommended four weeks."

6.5. At the same meeting, in respect of schools not participating in the Programme, Ms Karen O'Mahony of the *Rainbow Club* in Cork said that "Too many schools refuse to do it or to carry it out effectively. Too many children go without help, routine or structure during the summer months and the fallout for them and their families is a high price to pay."

6.6. Ms Jennings developed further on the price paid by autistic children and their families without access to the Summer Programme, stating that:

"The pressure on the child, parents, siblings and extended family is immense. There are no summer camps, playdates or family holidays during the nine or 13 weeks away from school. The long break causes an increase in the number of episodes of sensory overload, a regression in skills and a greater incidence of anxiety, self-injurious behaviours, aggression towards parents and siblings, destructive outbursts and absconding. When a child is regressing and losing the ability to cope, this puts a strain on families trying to support him or her. Family relationships come under immense pressure."

6.7. Witnesses also expressed their views on the provision of home-based tuition rather than an in-school Summer Programme. Representatives were united stating that the home-based programme falls considerably short of what is required by children with complex needs. At the same meeting, Ms Sarah Murphy, of Special Needs Schools and Classes said:

"The Department states all the time that one can get a home-based tutor if they cannot get the July provision in school. However, there is so much about being in school, such as getting on the bus and all the minutiae of life that is important to people, both children and adults, who do not really understand because they do not have the intellectual capacity. We build this life for them that they can enjoy and that they can progress in but we have to do it within the boundaries of what works, so introducing lots of

new things like a tutor, for example, for home-based provision does not work for my son and for many children with complex needs. It is so stressful. He could not tolerate a stranger in the home.”

6.8. Witnesses from parents’ advocacy groups were also forthcoming with recommendations for improvements that can be made to the Summer Programme. As referenced in the Committee’s resolution, witnesses recommended that the workforce be broadened to include other professionals, such as occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. Additionally, they referred to the benefits of engaging with third level students in these fields to participate in the Summer Programme, which would increase staffing and foster the development of relationships with these future professionals. Moreover, at the public meeting of 8 November 2022, Mr Mark Darmody suggested that it should be mandatory for special schools to provide the Summer Programme.

6.9. However, certain issues have been highlighted by other witnesses which identify barriers which may not be easily resolved by making it mandatory for special schools to provide the Summer Programme. For instance, at a public meeting of the Committee on 5 July 2022, Ms Máirín Ní Chéileachair of the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) said the following in relation to delays in paying teachers:

“One of the major issues we have found at trade union level is the payment of teachers for July provision. People are working this week and in our experience they will not see money until December. The prompt payment of teachers is a huge issue for it. There is a solution and we are hoping that this year the online claim system will be used effectively and far more efficiently than it was used last year for the payment of teachers.”

6.10. As there are underlying complexities concerning staffing and pay parity, establishing a requirement for special schools to provide the Summer Programme may be difficult to achieve without adequately addressing the underlying issues.

6.11. The issue of prompt payment is of particular significance as some teachers do not work on permanent contracts. This issue was highlighted at a public meeting of the Committee on 5 October 2022 by Ms Anne Howard of the Teachers' Union of Ireland.

"As members will be aware, not all teachers get full 22-hour contracts when they start out, particularly in the post-primary sector. Their contracts also do not pay them throughout the summer. Some people's payments end at the beginning of June and they are not paid again until they take up a contract in the summer. These people can be left with no choice but to take up other work during the summer months or to sign on for a jobseeker's payment. Some such teachers were concerned that they would not receive payment until December and could not allow themselves to receive no payment during the summer months."

6.12. In providing evidence and recommendations to the Committee on 20 September 2022, representatives of parents' advocacy groups highlighted the particularly effective model of the Summer Programme that is utilised in Malta, which includes features such as student work placements and a more diverse range of professionals involved in the programme. Ms Elaine Jenkins of Special Needs Schools and Classes also highlighted that the Maltese programme is eight weeks in duration, unlike the four week-long programme currently in place in Ireland. They also emphasised that the Maltese programme is "equitable" as "every child gets the opportunity to attend."

6.13. The Summer Programme in Ireland must also be equitable. It must take into account the needs of autistic children and children with SEN and the needs of their families. Schools must also be adequately supported in achieving this goal.

6.14. Work must begin now on ensuring that such a model of the Summer Programme is in place in 2023. The Committee believes that the implementation of the recommendations of this resolution will help to realise this aim.

## 7. Regression and the Need for an Adequate Summer Programme

- 7.1. The Summer Programme is of great importance to children with ASC and their parents for a multitude of reasons. For many autistic children, it provides a routine that is otherwise absent during the summer months.
- 7.2. This chapter will focus on the primary need from which the Summer Programme arose and which the Summer Programme must address. Namely, the need to mitigate regression in children with ASC over the summer months.
- 7.3. It is widely accepted that children with SEN, in particular children with ASC, experience regression to a greater extent than their neurotypical peers during the summer months.<sup>7 8 9</sup> Among the variety of traits that are sometimes associated with a diagnosis of autism is a difficulty in acquiring and maintaining skills.<sup>10</sup>
- 7.4. While children with disabilities experience regression over the summer months in respect of their academic skills, in areas such as reading and mathematics<sup>11</sup>, it is important to note that behavioural and social skills are also subject to regression. This point is of significance as it highlights the importance of therapeutic – as well as educational – interventions in a high-quality Summer Programme. In essence, while the Summer Programme would ideally take place in a child’s local school, schooling is not the single, exclusive purpose of the Summer Programme.
- 7.5. In “Regression Among Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: An Examination of Extended School Year Programming” (2013), Cross identifies two studies wherein social skills were addressed in a summer programme. The first

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<sup>7</sup> Duncan, J, (2016) The Impact of Summer Break from School On Children With Severe Autism And Their Parents: An Interdisciplinary Study, pp 35

<sup>8</sup> Cross, E.R, (2013) Regression Among Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: An Examination of Extended School Year Programming, pp 3-4

<sup>9</sup> Erdem H.S., (2020) Perspectives of Volunteer Pre-Service Teachers and Parents On A Summer Program for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders, pp 1

<sup>10</sup> Cross, E.R, (2013) Regression Among Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: An Examination of Extended School Year Programming, pp 17

<sup>11</sup> Cross, E.R, (2013) Regression Among Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: An Examination of Extended School Year Programming, pp 4

study evaluated a six-week summer programme which “included social skills training, behavioral treatment, or both” and found that “the summer treatment program was successful in improving social behaviors based on parent and therapist reports.”

7.6. Cross (2013) continues that in a subsequent study:

“Children attended the summer program for 6-hours a day, five-days a week. The social skills groups lasted for 20-minutes and were followed by 50-minute therapeutic cooperative activities targeting social skills, face and emotion recognition, interpretation of non-literal language and interest expansion.” In this case, “Results showed that the summer treatment program was successful in improving social behaviors based on both parent and staff ratings.”

7.7. While acknowledging gaps in research in respect of a loss of skills for children with ASC where no interventions are in place over the summer, the author states that “Research indicates that summer programs targeting the social needs of children with ASD have helped improve their social skills and abilities to interact socially.”

7.8. It is apparent in this research – and in the contributions made by parents to the Committee – that the Summer Programme benefits autistic pupils greatly and, saliently, mitigates regression. It is also evident that a truly comprehensive Summer Programme includes therapeutic interventions as well as academic components.

## 8. Respite and the Cost of Care: The Impact on Families

- 8.1. While the failure to provide an adequate Summer Programme impacts upon children with ASC, it also exacerbates issues for parents and carers. Two issues that are aggravated by a lack of access to the Summer Programme are the increased demand for respite care and costs associated with ASC services for families.
- 8.2. Respite care can be defined as “a break from caregiving that is designed to serve caregivers and families who are caring for people with disabilities or other special needs”.<sup>12</sup>
- 8.3. Respite care is of considerable importance to families of autistic children. As Whitmore notes in her paper, “Previous research has shown that stress is more prevalent in caregivers (especially mothers) of children with ASD when compared to caregivers of children with other disorders and typically developing children.”<sup>13</sup>
- 8.4. However, it is important to note that respite care is not simply a form of relief for parents and guardians – it can be a form of relief for the whole family.
- 8.5. The Summer Programme constitutes a form of respite care for many families during the summer period. For many of these families, it is often the only form of respite available to them.
- 8.6. It is important to note that relief for siblings as well as parents is of particular relevance in the context of the Summer Programme, as the siblings of children with ASC are often on their summer holidays at the same time. As a result, this can lead to siblings taking on care responsibilities at a young age throughout the duration of their summer holiday.
- 8.7. As Ms Miriam Jennings stated at a meeting of the Committee:

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<sup>12</sup> Whitmore, K.E., (2016) ‘Respite Care and Stress Among Caregivers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: An Integrative Review’, *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 31, pp 631

<sup>13</sup> Whitmore, K.E., (2016) ‘Respite Care and Stress Among Caregivers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: An Integrative Review’, *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 31, pp 630-631

“Siblings end up assisting with care and are left with no summer holidays themselves while parents try to hold the family unit together under incredible levels of stress and in a constant state of hyper-vigilance.”

- 8.8. The availability of respite services across the state is inconsistent, as there is less availability in certain counties in comparison to others. As such, one’s ability to avail of this service is often dependent on where one lives.
- 8.9. The failure to provide the Summer Programme throughout the country exacerbates the issues surrounding a lack of access to respite services, as it increases demand for an already strained service.
- 8.10. As a result, for those who cannot access respite care from the State, this can create a considerable financial burden.
- 8.11. The lack of an adequate, State-run Summer Programme results in parents considering the option of paying for respite care from private providers. This option is unsuitable for many families for various reasons.
- 8.12. It can be difficult to access as demand is high. Additionally, it can be unsuitable for autistic children as it can entail children working with an unfamiliar carer in an unfamiliar location, whereas the Summer Programme features teachers and a setting that is known to the child. In addition, there is a considerable cost associated with accessing private services.
- 8.13. Due to the restrictions described above, families struggle to access respite care from State providers or from private providers. This situation has resulted in parents being required to take unpaid leave from work to care for their children during the summer months.
- 8.14. In the *Plan for Places* report published in June 2022, the Ombudsman for Children writes:

“It should be noted that parents are central to meeting the needs of children with SEN, including autistic children, and that this often carries a substantial economic cost not met by the State. The results of a recent study on the issue found that a family’s average annual cost per autistic child amounted to €28,464.89, which related to private autism services, lost income, and informal care.”<sup>14</sup>

8.15. In their 2020 study on unmet need among children with ASC, Roddy and O’Neill write

“In addition to unmet needs, persons with ASDs and their families may experience considerable pressure on their financial resources due to the substantial financial burden that arises as a result of direct and indirect economic costs. Financial vulnerability experienced by families who feel obliged to fund access to care and expensive therapeutic interventions by incurring debt, suggests current met needs may be unsustainable in the future as such services cannot be funded indefinitely by recourse to debt.”<sup>15</sup>

8.16. In this study, the authors asked parents of autistic children a series of questions in respect of unmet service needs for their children and costs incurred by families. 33% of respondents indicated that they had incurred debt in the last 12 months specifically as a result of their child’s condition.<sup>16</sup> Roddy and O’Neill describe this as “indicative both of the inadequacy of current State provision and of the financial vulnerability of families affected by ASD.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ombudsman for Children, 2022. *Plan for Places, Forward Planning for the Provision of Schools Places for Children with Special Educational Needs: A Children’s Rights Issue*, pp 66

<sup>15</sup> Roddy, Á; O’Neill, C, 2020. ‘Predictors of unmet needs and family debt among children and adolescents with an autism spectrum disorder: Evidence from Ireland’, *Health Policy*, (124) 3, pp 318

<sup>16</sup> Roddy, Á; O’Neill, C, 2020. ‘Predictors of unmet needs and family debt among children and adolescents with an autism spectrum disorder: Evidence from Ireland’, *Health Policy*, (124) 3, pp 322

<sup>17</sup> Roddy, Á; O’Neill, C, 2020. ‘Predictors of unmet needs and family debt among children and adolescents with an autism spectrum disorder: Evidence from Ireland’, *Health Policy*, (124) 3, pp 322

8.17. As many services are not made available by the State for minimal or no cost to the service users, families can incur considerable expenses in accessing these services privately.

8.18. It is clear that families struggle to access and pay for services for autistic children. These issues are exacerbated considerably by an inability to access the Summer Programme as it increases demand for respite services, forces families to access private care services and can also result in families further limiting their income as a parent may have to take unpaid leave to care for their children.

8.19. An accessible and comprehensive Summer Programme is needed in 2023 to mitigate regression in children with ASC and to ensure that families do not rely on siblings to take on care responsibilities, incur additional costs or require parents to take unpaid leave. The absence of a Summer Programme will further exacerbate the pre-existing challenges for families, particularly in respect of access to respite care and costs associated with ASC.

## 9. Recommendations

- 9.1. That, notwithstanding the positive aspects of expanding the cohort of pupils that may participate in the Summer Programme, priority access to a school-based Summer Programme be given to those with conditions which place them most at risk of regression during the summer recess period, such as Autism Spectrum Condition.
- 9.2. That the Department of Education establishes a dedicated liaison team to provide information and assistance to school boards of management in providing the Summer Programme.
- 9.3. That the Department of Education liaises closely with the boards of management of special schools to identify and address any issues that would inhibit their ability to proceed with a comprehensive, school-based Summer Programme in 2023.
- 9.4. That the Department of Education establish a protocol whereby the resources of schools can be pooled together to ensure that the Summer Programme is made available in at least one school in every large town in the State.
- 9.5. That the Department of Education engages with the relevant teachers' and special needs assistants' trade unions to identify and resolve any pay anomalies and any delays in making payment to staff.
- 9.6. That the Department of Education expands the range of professions that may participate in the Summer Programme to include the following:
  - Child psychologists
  - Speech and Language Therapists
  - Occupational Therapists
  - Early childcare workers

- Third level students in the final two years of their programme in Education, Psychology, Therapy (such as Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy), Nursing and Medicine.

9.7. That the Department of Education engages with the relevant regulators for the above-named professions and advise them of the opportunities to participate in the Summer Programme.

9.8. That the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Garda National Vetting Bureau, resolve any difficulties with vetted staff working in different schools to provide the Summer Programme, while prioritising the safety of children and vulnerable persons.

## 10. Conclusion

- 10.1. This brief interim report provides an outline of the rationale behind the action taken by the Joint Committee on Autism in adopting this resolution. The basis for this short report is the urgency of the situation in respect of the Summer Programme 2023, which is referenced in the opening lines of the resolution.
- 10.2. As such, this report is not fully reflective of the breadth of contributions made by witnesses and research undertaken by the Committee in respect of a high-quality, comprehensive Summer Programme and its merits.
- 10.3. However, this report draws on the work of the Joint Committee on Autism and the contributions of the witnesses to its work. Moreover, it identifies the origins of the Summer Programme and its essential importance for autistic children and their families.
- 10.4. It is within this context that the accompanying resolution was adopted by the Joint Committee on Autism at its public session on 25 October 2022.

## Dáil Orders of Reference for Special Committee on Autism

That, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders—

- (1) a Special Committee consisting of 9 members of Dáil Éireann be appointed, to be joined with a Special Committee to be appointed by Seanad Éireann, to form the Joint Committee on Autism;
- (2) the Joint Committee shall consider matters relating to the services and supports provided by the State for autistic people and, in so doing, may have regard to the Resolutions of Dáil Éireann of 2 April 2019 and 29 April 2021 on these matters;
- (3) the Joint Committee shall make its final report to both Houses of the Oireachtas on the matters contained in paragraph (2) within nine months of the first public meeting of the Joint Committee, and shall, on the making of its final report, stand dissolved;
- (4) the quorum of the Joint Committee shall be four, at least one of whom shall be a member of Dáil Éireann, and one a member of Seanad Éireann;
- (5) members of either House, not being members of the Joint Committee, may attend and take part in proceedings of the Joint Committee, or any sub-Committee thereof, but without having a right to vote or to move motions or amendments, save where they attend, pursuant to Standing Orders, as a substitute for an absent member (or for a substitute not in attendance);
- (6) having nominated members to be members of the Joint Committee, the parties in Government shall nominate one of those members to be Cathaoirleach of the Joint Committee; and
- (7) the Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in paragraphs (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (9) and (10) of Standing Order 96.

## Seanad Orders of Reference for Special Committee on Autism

That, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders—

- (1) a Special Committee consisting of 5 members of Seanad Éireann be appointed, to be joined with a Special Committee to be appointed by Dáil Éireann, to form the Joint Committee on Autism;
- (2) the Joint Committee shall consider matters relating to the services and supports provided by the State for autistic people and, in so doing, may have regard to the Resolutions of Dáil Éireann of 2 April 2019 and 29 April 2021 on these matters;
- (3) the Joint Committee shall make its final report to both Houses of the Oireachtas on the matters contained in paragraph (2) within nine months of the first public meeting of the Joint Committee, and shall, on the making of its final report, stand dissolved;
- (4) the quorum of the Joint Committee shall be four, at least one of whom shall be a member of Seanad Éireann, and one a member of Dáil Éireann;
- (5) members of either House, not being members of the Joint Committee, may attend and take part in proceedings of the Joint Committee, or any sub-Committee thereof, but without having a right to vote or to move motions or amendments, save where they attend, pursuant to Standing Orders, as a substitute for an absent member (or for a substitute not in attendance);
- (6) having nominated members to be members of the Joint Committee, the parties in Government shall nominate one of those members to be Chairperson of the Joint Committee; and
- (7) the Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in paragraphs (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (9) and (10) of Standing Order 72.



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