

Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

OPENING STATEMENT

Bernard Gloster
Chief Executive Officer
6th December 2023



Introduction

Good evening Chairperson and members. Thank you for the invitation to meet with the Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to discuss *“Access to CAMHS for individuals with dual diagnosis”*. I am joined by my colleague(s):

- Ms Mellany McLoone, Chief Officer, CHO Dublin City and County
- Dr Amanda Burke, Child & Adolescent Consultant Psychiatrist & National Clinical Lead for Child and Youth Mental Health

I am supported by senior colleagues, Mr. Ray Mitchell and Ms. Sara Maxwell.

The range of services and supports for children and young people is extensive and is provided in acute and community settings. The HSE also works with and funds a number of providers in the voluntary sector to support the provision of services to children and young people. There has been an increased demand for mental health and disability services over a number of years, which has led to challenges for access, including waiting times and sometimes disjointed pathways. It is of concern to me that at times our patients and their families face challenges in accessing our CAMHS and our Disability Services, and the following is indicative of our approach to resolving these challenges.

The HSE has prioritised targeted service improvements to streamline referrals and patients get the right service at the right time, including:

- The National Policy on Access to Services for Children and Young People with Disability and Developmental Delay, which is designed to ensure that children are directed to the appropriate service based on the complexity of their presenting need.

- Joint working protocols between HSE Primary Care, Disabilities, and CAMHS to make the referral process between services as easy as possible for families and clinicians to navigate.
- The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Operational Guideline was published in June 2019 and highlights the importance of joint working or shared care with other agencies, including HSE Primary Care, Childrens Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) and other agencies supporting children and adolescents.
- The Model of Service for CAMHS-ID provides a framework for the development of specialist mental health services for children and adolescents with an intellectual disability, so they can access services in the same way as their peers.

The Final Report into CAMHS was published by the Mental Health Commission in July and the findings have been accepted by the HSE. Together with the Maskey Report and the findings from HSE commissioned audits on prescribing practices, adherence to the CAMHS Operational Guidelines and service user experiences, these findings are directly contributing to the HSE's programme of work to improve services, including:

- Piloting a standardised Autism assessment approach and protocol for use across all parts of the health service.
- Piloting a central referral mechanism within CHOs for all specialist community paediatric services in that area. This will provide a single point of access, a more integrated service user journey and help eliminate the practice of multiple, parallel referrals to different services.

- Implementing a Child & Youth Mental Health Improvement Programme, led by a dedicated National Office for Child and Youth Mental Health and informed by recommendations arising from the Mental Health Commission's review of CAMHS, and a recent audit of prescribing practice in CAMHS, adherence to operational guidance and service experiences.

The Model of Care for Dual Diagnosis (co-existing mental health and addiction) was launched jointly by Minister Butler and Minister Naughton in May 2023.

This model of care outlines specialist services to support individuals with a Dual Diagnosis including specialist services for Adolescents aged 10-17 years.

The Roadmap for Service Improvement for Disability Services for Children and Young People was launched by Government and the HSE in October 2023 and aims to:

- Ensure children are referred to the most appropriate service;
- Reduce the waiting time for children and improve outcomes;
- Optimise use of voluntary and private disability service providers for assessments and interventions;
- Improve HSE's legislative compliance for AONs;
- Improve staff retention in CDNTs, as a good place to work.

Many of the 60 actions contained in the Roadmap for service improvement have already been progressed.

Assessment of Need compliance continues to be challenging, which remains a concern for me. 7,612 applications for AON were received in the most recent 4 quarters, the highest number of applications received in any 12-month period since Part 2 of the Act was commenced in June 2007.

A revised AON SOP incorporating guidance on completion of clinical assessment was issued in July. The HSE continues to explore all options, including additional procurement from the private sector. AON Administrative and Assessment Hubs are now in place in order to streamline AON processes.

It is important to note that children do not require an AON in order to access a CDNT or Primary Care service.

A number of service improvements are being introduced to improve access to services for people with autism. A Programme Board, with representation from persons with lived experience of Autism, and is leading out on agreed priorities, including:

- 1) A Programme of Awareness Raising to provide better information for autistic people and their families, to improve access to services, support and understanding their condition better and to provide guidance to clinicians and Service Providers.
- 2) Build professional capacity and competence amongst key professionals working with Autistic people, including piloting the implementation of a tiered model of assessment for use in all services.

In addition to the measures outlined above, it is my intention to see the HSE, at all levels, increase and enhance our joint working with the other sectors with responsibility for the wellbeing of our young people, including education, youth services and TUSLA.

This concludes my Opening Statement.