

Further Revised Estimates Volume 2023
Select Committee on Children, Disability, Equality and Integration
Opening Statement by Minister Roderic O’Gorman T.D.
Wednesday 26th April 2023

Introduction

I am very pleased to be here today to discuss my department’s Further Revised Estimate for 2023. The committee will recall that I was with you very recently on 8th February when I presented the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth’s Estimate for 2023.

In the intervening period the transfer of additional functions in respect of Specialised Community Based Disability Services has been formalised. This expansion to the Department now requires that I revert with the Further Revised Estimate for debate and approval.

The expansion of the Department arose from the discussions at the time of the formation of the new Government and from the development of the Programme for Government, where it was decided to relocate a number of functions across Departments.

An initial transfer of functions saw a number of new areas of responsibility transfer to my Department from the Department of Justice and Equality, with effect from 14 October 2020. A small number of existing functions in the Youth Justice area transferred from my Department to the Department of Justice and Equality at the same time. With effect from the 1 January 2021, other functions transferred to the Department of Education and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

It was also agreed that functions in relation to Specialist Community Based Disability Services would transfer from the Department of Health to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and this transfer was finalised in 2023.

This latest transfer means that the Department will also take on a number of new areas which had previously been under the remit of the Department of Health. Thus, with effect from 1st March 2023 my Department also has responsibility for policy, legislation and oversight of the €2.6bn specialist community-based disability services budget.

Overall, the areas now transferring in, bring with them funding amounting to an additional €2.6bn in 2023. In this regard, the allocation for my Department is increasing to €5.9bn. This is an increase of €2.6bn from the Estimate approved by this committee in February.

As a result, my Department is spending €5.8 billion on current expenditure and €124 million in capital expenditure during 2023.

Turning to my Department’s Vote. I have provided the Select Committee with details of the funding allocations across the different programme areas, along with a summary of the 2023 allocation by subhead area, including details of changes over the 2022 figures, as allocated following the Supplementary Estimate last year.

In terms of the Vote allocation in 2023, 94 percent of the Department’s funding is concentrated in five areas of the Vote, namely:

- Specialist Community Based Disability Services (44%)
- Early Learning and Childcare (17%);
- Child and Family Agency (Tusla) (15%);
- Ukraine related spending (11%); and

- International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) (7%)

Youth Affairs is the next largest area representing 1% of the overall allocation with the Administration Budget for the Vote also accounting for 1% of the allocation. The balance of 4% of the allocation is spread across the remaining programmes and subheads on the Vote.

In my meeting with you in February, I dealt with the existing elements of the Vote. I gave an expanded overview of the larger areas of the Vote. This Further Revised Estimate now incorporates the transferred functions in respect of the Specialist Community Based Disability Services.

I therefore propose now to briefly address the area of the change before opening the debate up to yourselves.

The transfer of the Specialist Community Based Disability Services provides a unique stimulus towards achieving a more equal society and fulfilling our obligations to persons with disabilities. Minister Rabbitte and I strongly believe that the location of disability equality policy and oversight of specialist disability services in a single Department presents a significant opportunity to strengthen strategic disability policy development.

Critically, we are determined that it will facilitate the transition from a medical model of support towards a more holistic, human rights-based approach, in line with Ireland's commitments under the UN Convention.

And ultimately move us closer to achieving a more equal society, closer to fulfilling Ireland's commitment to the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and to fulfilling our obligations to persons with disabilities across Ireland.

This is of course very much in line with DCEDIY's broader vision as a Department for a fair, equal and inclusive society where rights are respected, and where everyone can reach their potential. It also speaks to the Department's broad mission to enhance the lives of children, young people, adults, families and communities, recognising diversity and promoting equality of opportunity.

My Department has been preparing for the transfer for some time. Amalgamation of the existing resources in DCEDIY with the incoming colleagues from the Department of Health to establish a new Disability Division within my Department will, over time, build our capability for strategic leadership and policy-making in the disability sector; for working closely with the HSE and partners in the sector; and for steering, coordinating and strengthening a whole-of-government approach to disability policy.

In terms of specialist disability services, the Disability Capacity Review (2021) has set out the scale of current unmet need and future demand to 2032. I recognise the level of increase in resources and investment that will be necessary to meet the service need and to implement the Disability Capacity Review Action Plan.

My Department, Minister Rabbitte and I will work with all stakeholders to meet the demands and challenges of an increasing, more complex and ageing demographic, as we seek to ensure that all persons with disabilities can live ordinary lives in ordinary places.

In advancing the Disability Capacity Review Action Plan, my Department will look anew at key policies such as Transforming Lives and Progressing Disability Services and critically review how

specialist disability services can be reformed over time and delivered more sustainably, with more early intervention, and greater control on the part of the individual.

Minister Rabbitte and I are acutely aware of the continuing pressures within disability services, some of which are long standing and systemic, and the impact these challenges have on persons with a disability, their families and those working to meet their needs.

We are determined to place a sustained focus on budgetary management and performance oversight and to target further investment where it can have the most positive impact. Staffing is a particular challenge and I welcome the HSE's commitment to prioritise recruitment of an additional 521 WTEs to disability services in 2023.

'Mainstream first' is at the heart of fair, sustainable and person-centred disability policy. Over 90% of people with disabilities have their needs met through the range of community health and social services available to all citizens. I look forward to continuing to engage collaboratively with Minister Donnelly and his Department to ensure a mainstream first approach is maintained with seamless integration between services.

Across the wider canvas Government action, the Disability Act 2006 sets out the responsibility on all public bodies to deliver their mainstream services to people with disabilities, and to plan and deliver services that are accessible to people with disabilities, in accessible premises, and through provision of accessible information and communications.

More broadly, the development of a new National Disability Strategy during 2023, a process that will be facilitated and steered by my Department, provides an opportunity to develop a framework for transformative change and a whole-of-Government shift to accelerating UNCRPD delivery. We will lead this process and in doing so we will prioritise the participation of people with disabilities and their representative organisations.

Underpinning this reform will be the development of legislation, including roll-out of the Assisted Decision-making Capacity Act, transposition of the European Accessibility Act and advancing legislative work on further regulation of residential care.

Chair, I am happy to provide further information on these and the other areas of the Vote which are detailed in the brief, as we move through the sub-heads during our discussion.

I and my Department will continue to work closely with all sectors and stakeholders as we strive to maximise outcomes from the resources being considered today.

Thank you Chair and Members for listening to my short introduction and I look forward to a fruitful and positive debate.

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