

Select Committee on Supplementary Estimate

28th November 2023

MOS Anne Rabbitte

Opening Statement

- I welcome the opportunity to speak to you here today in relation to expenditure for Disability Services and the important work it is funding.
- This Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs.
- Ultimately, our aim is to provide supports and services that will allow people with disabilities to live ordinary lives in ordinary places, in line with commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of Person's with Disability.

- We must acknowledge the difficult environment in which our service providers often operate. As we all know, 2023 has been a difficult year for households and businesses alike, with cost of living pressures affecting all of us.
- Furthermore, the provision of disability services is demand-led and therefore somewhat unpredictable, meaning that precise planning for the year ahead can be difficult.
- However, it is of course of utmost importance that the management of public monies be subject to the strictest scrutiny, so that we can balance our twin objectives of providing services for citizens with disabilities, as well spending prudently and effectively.
- I welcome the opportunity to re-state that the priority for this Government for 2024 will be the enhancement of person-centred supports and services, supporting the progressive rollout of the Action Plan for Disability Services, and implementing the Roadmap for Children's Disability Services

- In recent years, significant resources have been invested in disability services. This is reflected in the budget for disabilities services which has increased from €1.7bn at the close of 2017 to just under €2.8bn in 2024.
- The additional funding allocation of €195.1m for 2024 represents an increase of 7.6% for disability services and demonstrates the Government's strong commitment to building capacity in this area.
- This funding includes €64.1m for new developments and will help provide
 - extra residential places
 - extra therapy assistant positions for CDNTs
 - further day services places for next year's school leavers
 - an increase in the provision of personal assistance
 - development of further respite provision
 - and also development of capacity for community neuro-rehabilitation

- The extra funding sought in this supplementary budget is €112.5m. This funding is required to cover demand for additional services, increased service cost, the 2023 cost of the pay deal for S39 organisations, as well as extra Christmas payments for those in receipt of Blind Welfare, Mobility Allowance and the Rehabilitative Training grant.
- The bulk of the supplementary ask - €98m - relates to meeting cost pressures in service delivery, primarily residential services, through the provision of crisis-driven placements procured from for-profit providers, the changing profile of those seeking services, as well the cost of funding placements for young people with disabilities ageing out of TUSLA's care.
- The funding received for new developments in 2024 will be used in areas specifically targeted to mitigate these pressures – for example, we will be aiming to provide a larger portion of new residential places, as well as increasing provision of respite to promote family resilience.
- Though the extra funding in Budget 2024 is welcome, we know that there is more to do, which is why we have developed a

comprehensive Action Plan to help improve and expand services out to 2026. I very much look forward to launching this plan very soon.

- This Action Plan contains a range of actions designed to increase service capacity and increase our forward-planning capability. It is, however, a plan that will take time to come to fruition and allow us to comprehensively meet people's evolving needs. We can, therefore, reasonably expect other cost-pressures to arise in the coming years, which will be closely monitored and mitigated.
- Part of our programme of improvement post-transfer also involves implementing better controls and oversight of spending, to ensure we are providing the vital community services for people with disabilities, whilst responsibly and effectively managing public monies.

- This is a period of transition and transformation for community disability services, following the transfer of functions last March.
- As the first Minister of State for Disabilities in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, I committed to seizing this opportunity so that it makes a real tangible difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

Thank you.