

Select Committee on the Revised Estimate for 2024

30th January 2024

MOS Anne Rabbitte

Opening Statement

- I welcome the opportunity to speak to you here today in relation to the budget for Disability Services in 2024 and the important work which it is funding.
- This Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities that will allow them to live ordinary lives in ordinary places, in line with commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person's with Disability.
- 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 €2.9bn in 2024.
- The additional funding allocation of €272m for 2024 demonstrates the Government's strong commitment to building capacity in this area.
- The allocation for 2024 includes €74m for new developments and will help to provide:
 - 100 extra residential places for children and adults
 - 125 extra therapy assistant positions for CDNTs
 - 1250 to 1400 further day services places for next year's school leavers
 - an increase in the provision of personal assistance of 80,000 hours
 - development of further respite provision
 - and also development of capacity for community neuro-rehabilitation

- 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 was delighted to launch this plan with Minister O’Gorman and the CEO of the HSE in December of last year.
- This Action Plan contains a range of actions designed to increase service capacity and increase our forward-planning capability, but it is a plan that will take time to come to fruition and allow us comprehensive coverage in terms of meeting extant need.
- The Action Plan represents the first phase of work required in order to begin addressing the capacity deficits in the Disability Capacity Review to 2032.
- As such, it contains further enabling actions designed to begin the necessary groundwork which will help position us to make further capacity increases in 2025 and 2026, as well as in the successor plan which will follow in 2027.
- Working in tandem with the Action Plan is a Roadmap for Service Improvement in Children’s Services.

- The Roadmap contains an important set of actions that, collectively, will enhance children's disability services in Ireland. They include significant measures to integrate and improve access to services, expand the workforce and advance better communication and engagement with families.
- This is a crucial area and will receive close attention this year and, as I have already mentioned, will be supported by extra funding to hire 125 extra therapy assistants in 2024.
- As the Committee will be aware, a number of budgetary pressures arose in this area in 2023 which were addressed through a supplementary estimate. In response to this, a significant ELS provision of €198 was made in the Disability budget for 2024. However, I am very conscious that some pressures will persist into 2024.
- In that context, 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 will

be an important objective for myself and for Department officials for the year ahead.

- This is a period of transition and transformation for community disability services, following the transfer of functions last March.
- I committed to seizing this opportunity so that it makes a real tangible difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

Thank you.