



**Mr Bernard O'Regan**  
**Assistant National Director**  
**Head of Operations – Disabilities**

Via email only to: [bernard.oregan@hse.ie](mailto:bernard.oregan@hse.ie)

11<sup>th</sup> July 2024

**Re: Proposed National Disability Authority Review of Children's Disability  
Network Teams Service Model**

Dear Bernard,

I am writing in relation to the proposed National Disability Authority (NDA) Review of Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) Service Model. You previously provided my office with a draft project outline and subsequently an amended draft project outline.

I have engaged with our workplace representatives working in Children's Disability Services in relation to the drafts provided and wish to advise that FÓRSA do not believe the current project outline as provided to us is fit for purpose.

I will now set out the rationale which led to this conclusion:

- The overarching Terms of Reference set out in the project outline as drawn from the Roadmap document were not agreed with FÓRSA. There was no staff and/or parent/family involvement with the development of the Roadmap. FÓRSA had previously requested the Terms of Reference of the NDA review and will evaluate same on their merit and not linked to the unilaterally generated Roadmap document.
- The premise of the research as identified in the project outline is to evaluate the current operation of Progressing Disability Services (PDS) in delivering a model of services in keeping with the 12 principles of PDS. It is entirely unclear from the project outline how services will be judged against these Principles e.g. what parameters will be used. The illustrative examples provided in the appendix only affirms our concern that this research approach is neither appropriate nor useful. A descriptive and subjective analysis of the 12 principles of PDS is of no benefit as we try to overcome the significant challenges currently faced within Children's Disability Services.
- There is a fundamental disagreement with the view that *"A review of whether the PDS model is the most appropriate model for Ireland is considered not to be*

*in scope given how progressed implementation is and allowing for the need for any new system to have a period of embedding before being judged as being successful or not.”* It is clear from the research conducted by Asst. Professor Geraldine Moran and Dr. Noreen O’Leary that any review of PDS must be cognisant of whether it is the most appropriate model for Ireland. Fórsa believe that the recommendations from the research conducted by Asst. Professor Geraldine Moran and Dr. Noreen O’Leary need to be central to the NDA review. Furthermore, were we to accept the rationale that the new system must have a period of embedding before being substantively reviewed, it would bring into question the very timeline of any NDA review.

- Similarly, the rationale for the exclusion of evaluating outcomes for children and young people with disabilities isn’t accepted. This very question is key to understanding what is working well/ or not within Children’s Disability Services.
- The overarching project outline is confusing with a clear statement at the beginning about the review being descriptive in nature but later on very specific ‘sub-projects’ being identified. For example, the suggestion of an interim report on well-staffed teams appears to predetermine the outcome of the review. Any interim report should be based on the agreed research project. It is our strongly held view that the project outline should be streamlined with a revised terms of reference.
- The issue of leadership and management is a core issue of concern and has been discussed at length between Fórsa and the management side. While this is explicitly stated as an additional area, outside of the 12 principles, that the review will examine, there is no further detail available.
- It is unclear if the review intends to encompass the totality of Children’s Disability Services or those only provided by CDNTs. The focus group for CAMHS and Primary Care focuses on referrals, without mention of the National Access Policy, and not on broader service provision. Such an approach would be a missed opportunity.
- The governance of the review needs to be amended to include a staff representative on the Consultative Committee as well as a child/family representative. Fórsa are of the view that an expanded Consultative Committee is a more streamlined approach to governance of the review and that the draft report should be shared with the Consultative Committee in the first instance. The purpose of the RAG is also unclear, and it excludes professional bodies who are a key stakeholder.



- The approach to the development of survey questions for staff, without staff input is a concern, as is the lack of anonymity. Furthermore, the sample sizes are, in our view, too small across all proposed groups.
- Questions related to the provision of private services are not appropriate within a review of public service provision.
- There will need to be clarity about what administrative data will be analysed as the current experience is that there are different approaches to the defining and capturing of data across the 96 CDNTs.
- Much of the literature review focuses on an analysis of other jurisdictions. These jurisdictions are not listed or identified. In addition, much of the review focuses on a workforce plan for disability services which is also being progressed internally within the HSE. There is limited value to the review repeating work that is already underway. It would be welcome if the HSE can differentiate between these two processes.
- Any reference to optimum level of intervention needs to incorporate an approach that reflects interdisciplinary working as well as recognising that in some instance discipline specific working is also indicated and appropriate. Evidence based safe staffing guidance would be an important output of the review.
- The review does not consider the impact of Assessment of Need on service provision.
- What are the non-clinical competencies indicated in the review?
- It would be of immense value for the review to interview staff who have recently left the service to identify the issues they experienced within the provision of services.
- It is unclear what role former Heads of Discipline will play in the review. The management side has committed to recruiting Discipline Managers within Disability services. This cohort will be integral to any review conducted.

In addition to the above, I also include a copy of the project outline with tracked changes identifying other specific feedback.



Fórsa are of the view that an independent review of Children's Disability Services is vital to restore public confidence in Children's Disability Services. Moreover, it is an absolute necessity for children and young people who are struggling to access high quality, public services at present.

However, the current project outline does not meet those requirements. It is entirely focused on avoiding the central issues that staff and parents are asking about, for example, whether this model is appropriate for the Irish context, what is the evidence base to support same, what resources, benchmarked internationally, are required to deliver the model, and what are the anticipated clinical outcomes of this model when properly resourced. Until such time as these core questions are addressed, our members cannot support the review.

I trust the above sets out our position which we intend to communicate to both Minister O'Gorman and Minister Rabbitte. Fórsa would welcome discussion on same at our next Joint Union Management Forum meeting.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Kelly".

Linda Kelly  
National Secretary

cc. Ms Ann Bourke, National Service Improvement Lead, Children's Disability Services  
Ms Mary Doran, Assistant National Director HR, Disabilities  
Ms Jackie Nix, Assistant National Director, HR Community Operations  
Ms Mary Fox, Enable Ireland  
Ms Tracy McKenna, St Michael's House