

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday, 17th May 2023

No community neurorehabilitation teams in 7 out of 9 CHOs across Ireland

- *NAI highlights critical delays in implementation of National Neurorehabilitation Strategy -*

The lack of community neurorehabilitation teams across the country is resulting in preventable levels of disability, pressure on our healthcare system, and increased costs to the health service. That's according to the Neurological Alliance of Ireland who is presenting to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health today (17.05.23).

The NAI is calling for funding to be allocated in Budget 2024 to establish community neurorehabilitation teams in three CHO areas in Ireland, where no funding has been allocated to date.

In addition, the NAI is calling for priority action by the HSE to establish teams in CHOs where funding has been made available. Of the nine CHOs nationwide, two have been both allocated funding and have a community neurorehabilitation team up and running.

Community neurorehabilitation teams provide short-term intensive rehabilitation, including access to multidisciplinary services such as physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, social work, and neuropsychology.

The commitment to establish a community neurorehabilitation team in each of the nine CHO areas across the country is part of the 2019-2021 framework for the National Neurorehabilitation Strategy, a commitment in the current Programme for Government.

Speaking in advance of the presentation, **Magdalen Rogers, NAI Executive Director** said: "Community neurorehabilitation teams play a crucial role in tackling the lack of access to neurorehabilitation in the community. When people with neurological conditions don't have access to these services, it leads to a significant, and preventable, level of disability. As a result of this, there is increased pressure on our already overburdened healthcare system.

"The lack of access to neurorehabilitation teams in the community also results in increased costs to the health service through earlier admission to nursing homes, increased need for home care supports as well as the increased likelihood of falls and subsequent hospital readmissions.

"Demand for community neurorehabilitation services, already high pre- pandemic, is now critical due to the combined needs of those who were discharged early and missed out on

neurorehabilitation, those impacted by the curtailment or closure of services due to lockdown and those requiring rehabilitation after the virus.

“The lack of neurorehabilitation teams in the community is exacerbating the problem of delayed discharges, further limiting access to inpatient neurorehabilitation in facilities such as the National Rehabilitation Hospital. From having the national network of community neurorehabilitation teams in place, up to 42,000 hospital bed days annually could be freed up – based on an average saving of 3 hospital bed days per neurological patient, if they can be discharged to a community neurorehabilitation team.

“We are asking members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee for their support for the funding of teams in CHO areas where there has been no allocation to date, and priority action in areas where funding has been made available, in order to deliver on the commitment to have a team in each of the nine CHO areas across the country.”

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Notes to Editors:

Available for interview / comment:

- Mags Rogers, NAI Executive Director.

About the Neurological Alliance of Ireland

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) brings together 30 non-profit organisations to advocate for the rights of 800,000 people in Ireland living with a neurological condition.

Neurological conditions affect the brain and spinal cord. They are the leading cause of disability throughout the world and include many common conditions such as stroke, dementia, migraine, epilepsy and acquired brain injury as well as rare and genetic conditions.

Founded in 2003, the NAI advocates for the development of quality services for people with neurological conditions. Its campaigns are rooted in the experience of its members and the people and families with whom they work. It provides a united and expert voice on neurological care through research, advocacy, policy development, and education.

Further information is available at www.nai.ie and www.patientsdeservebetter.ie.

What is a CHO?

The Health Service Executive (HSE) established nine Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) across the country as a new means of delivering health services. CHOs are community healthcare services outside of acute hospitals, such as primary care, social care,

mental health, and other health and well-being services. These services are delivered through the HSE and its funded agencies to people in local communities, as close as possible to their homes. In each CHO, a Chief Officer will lead a local management team which focuses on all of the specialist services in their area.

National Strategy

National Strategy & Policy for the Provision of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services in Ireland can be downloaded from hse.ie [here](#).