

Over 700,000 people in Ireland affected by neurological disorders live daily with conditions which impact on every aspect of their lives. This impact is also felt by their families and their communities. As our population ages, and as new treatments become available, the care needs of people with neurological conditions are an important challenge for our health system.

As Minister for Health and Children, I recognise that neurology has made a significant contribution to innovation in healthcare in Ireland, focusing on how services can be delivered closer to patients and in multi-disciplinary teams that respond to patients as people. I have seen neurology lead in areas such as the use of telemedicine, assistive technology and rehabilitation. I have been impressed with the models where specialists act more as a resource to primary care so they can manage neurological symptoms in a way that is more convenient for patients. Recognising the growing importance of this area significant investment has been made into the development of neurology services. The forthcoming National Neuro-Rehabilitation Strategy will provide a further step to meet the needs of those with progressive and disabling neurological conditions. It will seek to address a very centralised service with a model that links national expertise more comprehensively with regional and community provision. It will seek to push for voluntary sector provision to be reconfigured to cut down duplication of service provision and particularly of back room staff and for them to move from disease specific provision to provide better for all patients with needs in a given area

This important publication by the Neurological Alliance of Ireland is unique in bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to identify the valuable services and expertise currently provided within the health system to neurology patients and their families. There is recognition of the significant opportunity provided by health care reform and changes in practice to deliver real improvements in the quality of care for people with neurological conditions in this country. It also highlights the challenges and opportunities for the neurological services into the future.

I recognise the work of the Neurological Alliance of Ireland as a key partner with my Department in this area. Through its publications and activities, including the Standards of Care documents and the development of National Brain Awareness Week, the NAI continues to inform and influence the debate on neurological care in this country. I recognise this publication as an important contribution in our journey together and pay tribute to work of all the organisations under the NAI umbrella.



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