



Call for Further Support to Implement the National Strategies for Stroke, Dementia and Neurorehabilitation and National Models of Care for Neurology, Epilepsy, Stroke, Specialist Rehabilitation & Dementia.

Neurological conditions now represent the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide¹.

According to the World Health Organisation one in three of us will develop a neurological condition at some point in our lifetime².

Over 860,000 Irish people are living with a neurological condition, 50,000 people are diagnosed with a neurological condition each year³. With the most recent census showing a 22% increase in our population over 65 years⁴ the number of people at risk of neurological conditions associated with ageing is set to increase significantly.

Commitment both from the current Government and from future

administrations must reflect the scale of this challenge for our health services.

Ireland, as a member of the World Health Organisation, has signed up to the Intersectoral Global Action Plan for Epilepsy and Other Neurological Disorders: a ten year global framework to improve access to treatment, care and quality of life for people with neurological conditions⁵.

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland, the national umbrella of over 30 not for profit organisations, is calling for the implementation of these key existing healthcare strategies in order to meet the targets outlined in the WHO framework for all member states.

Call for Further Support
to Implement the National Strategies for Stroke, Dementia
and Neurorehabilitation and National Models of Care for Neurology, Epilepsy,
Stroke, Specialist Rehabilitation & Dementia.

¹ Steinmetz et al (2024) Global regional and national burden of disorders affecting the nervous system 1990-2021: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021. *Lancet Neurology* Vol 23. Issue 4 Pages 344-381

² WHO Position Paper (August 2022): *Optimising Brain Health Across the Life Course*: World Health Organisation

³ *Model of Care for Neurology Services in Ireland (2016)* Health Services Executive & Royal College of Physicians Ireland

⁴ CSO Census of Population 2022: Summary Results May 2023

⁵ *Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and Other Neurological Disorders 2022-2031 (May 2022)* World Health Organisation



Neurology

Neurological disorders include a diverse range of conditions that affect the brain, spinal cord, nerves and muscles e.g. peripheral neuropathy, Parkinson's disease, headache, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and many other rare and genetic disorders.

These conditions now represent the leading cause of disability worldwide and account for one in five acute medical hospital admissions. The impact of these diseases is reflected in the waiting lists, with more than 21,000 people awaiting a first neurological appointment, and 3,500 of these waiting more than 18 months. Unfortunately, despite increases in consultant numbers we still have the lowest number of neurologists per population in Europe and parts of the country with little or no access to neurology locally. We have seen how investment in the

modernised care pathway for headache led to significant improvements in waiting lists and length of stay through the introduction of specialist clinics, neurology specialist nurses and multidisciplinary teams. With an ageing population, increasing numbers of people with neurological disease and growing complexity of therapies, it has never been more important to implement the recommendations of the **Models of Care for Neurology and Epilepsy**. We need to ensure equitable access to neurological services nationally and adequately resource specialist centres for more complex or rare disease. We need to ensure that patients with neurological disease can access neurology services closer to home and benefit from treatments earlier to improve health outcomes and reduce disability.

Rehabilitation

Access to quality rehabilitation must be timely and equitable for all those who require it. The World Health Organisation and UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities both recognise rehabilitation as an essential component of healthcare and emphasise an urgent need to strengthen rehabilitation services^{6,7}. Here in Ireland, there has been progress with the development of managed clinical rehabilitation networks and the development of five community neurorehabilitation teams across the country. It is hoped that those with neurorehabilitative needs will begin to feel the benefit of these services in 2024.

There is increased recognition of the value and need for rehabilitation services across all domains of the HSE. However more planning is required to develop and resource rehabilitation networks using an integrated and strategic approach: key to which will be the delivery of a national measurement system for specialist rehabilitation. Investment is needed in order to fully implement the **National Neurorehabilitation Strategy** which will include the development of specialist inpatient rehabilitation units and the continued rollout and expansion of community neurorehabilitation.

6 Rehabilitation: A Call to Action. Meeting Report February 2017 World Health Organisation

7 Article 26 "Habilitation and Rehabilitation" UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. (2006) World Health Organisation

Stroke

Stroke is the second leading cause of death in middle to higher-income countries and the leading cause of acquired adult neurological disability in Ireland. Stroke is demonstrable example in an Irish context of how investment can deliver on clear outcomes for neurological patients. Overall mortality from stroke has declined since 2008 from 19% to 11%. Access to thrombolysis has increased from 1% to 11%, thrombectomy from 0% to 8%. 764 patients were returned home with early supported discharge in 2022. This equates to approximately 10% of the total number of patients and approximately 25% of the patients served by an early supported

discharge team. The National Stroke Strategy is aiming to have 21 ESD teams in place by end of 2025. INAS reported a median reduction in LOS of 8 days for those who went home with early supported discharge.

With a predicted 58% increase in stroke in Ireland by 2040, there is a critical need to realise the vision set out in the Stroke Action Plan for Europe through the full implementation of the **National Stroke Strategy 2022-2027** and development and implementation of future strategic approaches to stroke.

Dementia

Dementia is an umbrella term to describe a variety of diseases that affect the brain. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause-responsible for approximately 60-70% of cases. Other causes include Lewy Body dementia, frontotemporal dementia, and many others. In Ireland it is estimated that over 64,000 people have dementia; this is predicted to double by 2045. The Model of Care (MoC) for Dementia, published in May 2023, builds on the principles of the National Dementia Strategy 2014, in emphasising the importance of timely diagnosis, interventions and supports for those with dementia and keeping the person affected at the core of the process. Implementation of the Model has secured funding commitments for the delivery of a number of memory service models:

- * A National Intellectual Disability Memory Service which offers a unique skill mix to support the complex needs of people with intellectual disabilities

- * Four Regional Specialist Memory Clinics (RSMCs), which will cater to the needs of those with more complex presentations such as those under the age of 65, or those with more unusual cognitive difficulties

- * Ten new Memory Assessment and Support Services will primarily support older persons with a typical and clear presentation, often in regions which were historically under-served by such services. National Dementia Services aim to realise all the targets of the Model of Care over the next 5 years, including an accessible memory service per 150,000 people and at least five RSMCs. If the **Model of Care for Dementia** is fully resourced and implemented, approximately 10,600 people with cognitive concerns will be assessed, diagnosed and supported each year. Access to timely diagnosis will become ever more important as the first drugs that can slow the progress of Alzheimer's disease become available.

Member Organisations of the Neurological Alliance of Ireland

Acquired Brain injury Ireland

Alzheimer Society of Ireland

An Saol

Aphasia Ireland

Ataxia Foundation Ireland

Bloomfield Health Services

Cheshire Ireland

Chronic Pain Ireland

Croí

Dystonia Ireland

Dublin Neurological Institute

Early Onset Parkinson's Disease Association (EOPD)

Enable Ireland

Epilepsy Ireland

Headway

Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland

Irish Heart Foundation

Irish Hospice Foundation

Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association

Migraine Association of Ireland

Move4Parkinsons

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland

Muscular Dystrophy Ireland

Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland

Neurology Support Centre

North West MS Therapy Centre

Parkinson's Ireland

Peamount Healthcare

Polio Survivors Ireland

PSPA Ireland

Slanu Stroke Rehab

Spinal Injuries Ireland

Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland

The Rehab Group

Vision Ireland

Associate Members

Brain Tumour Ireland

About the Neurological Alliance of Ireland

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) brings together over thirty non profit organisations to advocate for the rights of the over 860,000 people in Ireland living with a neurological condition.

Founded in 2003, the NAI advocates for the development of quality services for people with

neurological conditions. Our campaigns are rooted in the experience of our members and the people and families with whom they work. We provide a united and expert voice on neurological care through advocacy, policy development and awareness raising.



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