



New Research Reveals Urgent Gaps in Neurology Services Across Ireland, Impacting Over 860,000 People

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL THURSDAY 23RD APRIL 2026 — New research published by the Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) highlights significant gaps in neurology services across Ireland, with over 860,000 people—equivalent to one in six of the population—living with a neurological condition and facing increasing barriers to timely diagnosis, treatment and ongoing care.

The report, based on a nationwide survey of neurology centres and in-depth patient engagement, reveals that despite the ambitions set out in the 2016 Model of Care for Neurology Services, many recommendations remain unimplemented ten years on. As a result, services are under sustained pressure, with growing waiting lists, regional inequities and critical staffing shortages affecting patient outcomes.

There are currently **over 24,000 people waiting for an outpatient neurology appointment**, according to figures from the National Treatment Purchase Fund, with **more than 4,000 waiting over 18 months**. The number of people on a waiting list to see a neurologist has almost doubled over the past 10 years (Source: Outpatient Waiting Lists by Speciality www.ntpf.ie), reflecting both rising demand and the impact of an ageing population.

Magdalen Rogers, Chief Executive of the Neurological Alliance of Ireland, said:

“This report confirms what patients and families across Ireland have been telling us for years—access to neurology services is inconsistent, under-resourced and, in many cases, simply not meeting needs. With one in six people in Ireland living with a neurological condition, this is not a niche issue—it is a major public health challenge.

We are encouraged by the Government’s commitment to a hub-and-spoke model, but it is critical that this is delivered with urgency and backed by the necessary investment in staffing and infrastructure. Patients simply cannot afford to wait any longer.”

Significant Inequalities and Staffing Gaps

The report highlights stark regional disparities in access to care, with several Model 3 hospitals **lacking adequate neurology services, contrary to the recommendations set out in the Model of Care**.

Findings from the survey of all ten neurology centres in Ireland reveal:

- **None of the centres have the full recommended multidisciplinary team in place** ●
Only **half** of centres have dedicated **physiotherapy access**
- Only **4** centres have access to **dedicated speech and language therapy**
- Less than **a third** of centres had access to **neuropsychology**
- Only **1** centre has access to a dedicated **dietitian**
- **4** centres had no access to post acute inpatient **neurorehabilitation**



In addition, Ireland currently has just 97 specialist neurology nurses, well below the estimated requirement of at least 166, leaving a shortfall of approximately 70 nurses.

Orla Hardiman, Professor of Neurology and Head of the Academic Unit of Neurology at Trinity College Dublin and Consultant Neurologist at Beaumont Hospital, said:

“The demand for neurological services in Ireland is rising rapidly. This report clearly demonstrates the gap between policy and reality on the ground.”

Addressing workforce shortages and ensuring access to multidisciplinary care are essential if we are to deliver safe, effective and equitable services. A fully implemented hub-and-spoke model offers a pathway forward, but it must be adequately resourced and strategically delivered.”

Patients Left “In Limbo”

The human impact of these gaps is stark. Patients and families report long delays, significant travel burdens and limited access to follow-up care. Many describe their lives being placed “on hold” while waiting for appointments and services.

Feedback gathered through nationwide focus groups includes:

- *“I have a neurology service, but it is 120 miles away, so I have to travel to see people.”*
- *“It means a two-hour drive from here and a two-hour drive home.”*
- *“Outside of that expertise that we only see maybe once every six months or once every year, we are in a bit of a limbo....if we are deteriorating or if something new happens.”*

Call for Urgent Action and System Reform

The NAI is calling for urgent action to address these systemic issues and ensure equitable access to high-quality neurology services nationwide. Key recommendations include:

- Delivering equitable neurology services across all hospitals, including full services in Model 3 hospitals
- Addressing critical staffing shortages, particularly in specialist nursing and multidisciplinary teams
- Investing in neurorehabilitation and long-term community supports

The organisation has welcomed the Minister for Health’s commitment to developing a hub-and-spoke model for neurology services, aligned with the Programme for Government’s pledge to increase the numbers of neurologists and specialist nurses.

A Growing Challenge

With 50,000 new neurological cases diagnosed annually and numbers expected to rise, the NAI is urging policymakers to act on the report’s recommendations to ensure a sustainable, equitable and patient-centred neurology service for the future.

The full report can be found here



ENDS

For media enquiries, please contact:

Ciara O’Driscoll | Etch Communications | ciara@etchcomms.ie | 087 689 3600

Laura Greer | Etch Communications | laura@etchcomms.ie | 086 960 5600

Notes to Editor:

About Neurological Alliance of Ireland:

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland brings together 40 non profit organisations to advocate for the rights of the over 860,000 people throughout Ireland living with a neurological condition. Neurological conditions affect the brain and spinal cord and now represent the leading cause of disability worldwide. Founded in 2003, the NAI advocates for the development of quality services for people living with neurological conditions. Our campaigns are rooted in the experiences of our members and the individuals and families with whom they work. We provide a united and expert voice on neurological care through advocacy, policy development and awareness raising. More information can be found at www.nai.ie.