

# Neurological Alliance Of Ireland Survey Finds Critical Resource Deficits In Neurology Care

**New report from the Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) highlights critical gaps in care 10 years on from the publication of a national plan for neurology.**

The Model of Care for Neurology Services in Ireland<sup>1</sup> was published in 2016. The overarching aim is that “patients should have equitable access to a high quality responsive service”. It set out a requirement that specialist care should be provided by a consultant neurologist with a team of specialist nurses and health and social care professionals. Ten years on, research carried out by the Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) shows that many of the recommendations have yet to be implemented, with staffing and resourcing deficits are leading to lengthy waiting lists, regional inequality, and critical gaps in multidisciplinary care.

## **1 IN 6 PEOPLE IN IRELAND IS LIVING WITH A NEUROLOGICAL CONDITION**

Over 860,000 in Ireland are living with a neurological condition and 50,000 new cases are diagnosed each year; these numbers are set to increase with our aging population.

## **24,000 PEOPLE WAITING FOR NEUROLOGY OUTPATIENT APPOINTMENTS**

According to the latest figures from the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), more than 24,000 adults are waiting for an outpatient consultation with a consultant neurologist, with over 4000 waiting more than 18 months.

1. | National Clinical Programme for Neurology: Model of Care (2016)  
Health Services Executive

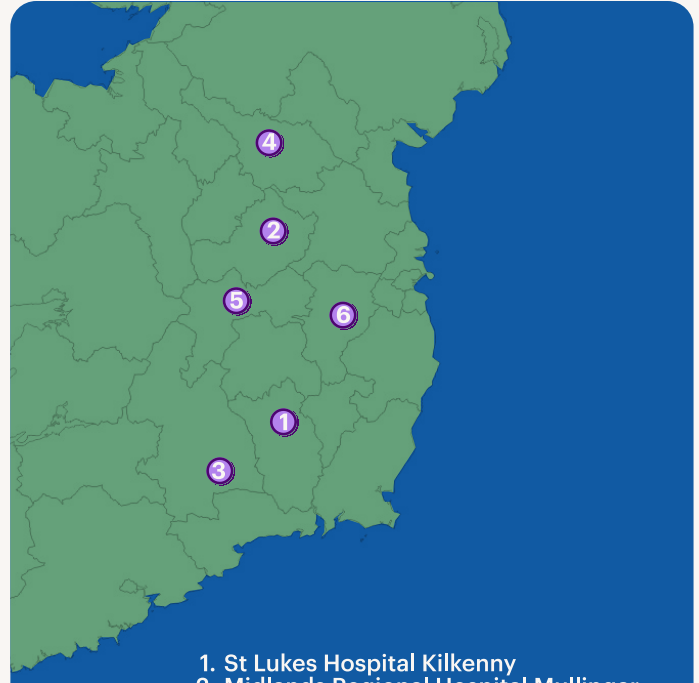
# Neurological Alliance Of Ireland Latest Report Towards An Equitable Integrated Neurology Service For Ireland

## KEY FINDINGS

### Critically limited neurology services across a number of Model 3 hospitals

A national survey of neurology centres for the NAI report found critically limited services across a number of Model 3 hospitals, despite the 2016 Model of Care recommendation that all Model 3 hospitals have dedicated neurology services.

#### MODEL 3 HOSPITALS WITH CRITICALLY LIMITED ACCESS TO NEUROLOGY



1. St Lukes Hospital Kilkenny
2. Midlands Regional Hospital Mullingar
3. Tipperary University Hospital
4. Cavan General Hospital
5. Midlands Regional Hospital Tullamore
6. Naas General Hospital

## CRITICAL GAPS IN STAFFING ACROSS NEUROLOGY SERVICES

(based on a self report survey across all ten neurology centres across Ireland)

### NONE OF THE NEUROLOGY CENTRES REPORTED HAVING THE FULL COMPLEMENT OF MULTI-DISCIPLINARY STAFF RECOMMENDED IN THE 2016 MODEL OF CARE.

- **Only half of the centres** reported dedicated access to physiotherapy.
- **Only 4 of the 10 centres** have dedicated access to speech and language therapy.
- **Less than a third** of centres have dedicated access to neuropsychology.
- **Only 1 centre** has dedicated access to a dietician.
- **4 of 10 centres** had no access to post acute inpatient neurorehabilitation services.

### 70 ADDITIONAL SPECIALIST NEUROLOGY NURSES NEEDED

There are currently 97 WTE specialist neurology nurses across the country. Based on international standards, Ireland requires a minimum of approx. 166 specialist nurses to meet demand.

2. Specialist Nursing Recommendations based on the following accepted standards

Multiple Sclerosis: 1 nurse per 315 patients (MS Nursing in the UK 2018) | Headache: 1 nurse per 140,000 population (Model of Care for Neurology Services in Ireland 2016) | Epilepsy: 1 nurse per 140,000 population (Epilepsy Model of Care 2017) | Parkinson's Disease: 1 nurse per 300 patients (Model of Care for Neurology Services in Ireland 2016) | Rare Diseases: 1 nurse per 500,000 population (Local Adult Neurology Services for the Next Decade, Association of British Neurologists June 2011)

# INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES PAY THE PRICE FOR UNDERRESOURCING OF NEUROLOGY SERVICES

**“Life on hold” while people wait for appointments, travel long distances for care and struggle to access services after diagnosis**

A nationwide series of focus groups conducted as part of the NAI research found that people living with neurological conditions are experiencing long waiting lists and significant gaps in care. Concerns about current and future care needs is leading to high levels of anxiety among patients, families and carers.

**Focus group participants made the following comments:**

*“When I turned eighteen, they said that it would be very challenging to get into the adult system, when I did get into the adult system, I was waiting like three years”*

*“It means for me a two-hour drive from here and a two-hour drive home, between diesel and parking fees”*

*“There was a huge gap there. I didn’t get physiotherapy. I had a bit of regression as a result of not getting that intervention”*

*“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... when we are deteriorating or if something new happens”*

*“I have a neurology service, but it is 120 miles away, so I have to travel to see people”*

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**The Neurological Alliance of Ireland is calling for action to deliver on the commitments to Neurology Services within the current Programme for Government by:**



**Providing equitable access to multidisciplinary neurology services across the hospital network**



**Addressing critical staffing shortages across neurology services**



**Investing in neurorehabilitation and long-term specialist supports for people with neurological conditions in the community.**

## List of NAI Member Organisations

Acquired Brain injury Ireland  
Alzheimer Society of Ireland  
An Saol  
Aphasia Ireland  
Ataxia Foundation Ireland  
Bloomfield Health Services  
Brain Tumour Ireland  
Cheshire Ireland  
Chronic Pain Ireland  
Crann Centre  
Croí  
Dystonia Ireland  
Dublin Neurological Institute  
EOPD Ireland  
Enable Ireland  
Epilepsy Ireland  
FND Ireland  
Headway Ireland  
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  
Spinal Injuries Ireland  
Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland  
The Rehab Group  
Vision Ireland

## NAI Contact Details

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