



07th March 2024

Ms. Jennifer Whitmore, TD,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ/55303/23

Re: Provision of appropriate intervention to children with ASD in Wicklow

Dear Deputy Whitmore,

I can confirm that in 2023, two "More than Words" Parent Training Programmes for children with Autism and Social Communication difficulties were completed in each area across Community Healthcare East (CHE) (encompassing Dublin South, Dublin South East and Wicklow) in Primary Care. This occurred following submission of a business case to the Senior Management team in Primary Care and the programmes were delivered by a private practitioner outside of existing HSE staffing resources and aligned within a waiting list initiative and non-recurring budget.

In October 2023 Bernard Gloster CEO of the HSE extended the current recruitment pause to include all external recruitment. Until this pause is lifted the HSE are unable to employ outside agencies which would include the 'More than Words' programme private practitioner. Senior management in Primary Care will discuss with the Speech and Language Therapy service managers across CHE as to whether the programme can be completed within existing staffing resources for 2024. Unfortunately until the current employment embargo is lifted and budget availability within 2024 is set out, the HSE in CHE are unable to commit funding outside of the core services available to it.

Yours sincerely,

Sinead Kilbride
General Manager, Primary Care