



**Oifig an Stiúrthóir Náisiúnta,
Caipéal agus Eastáit**

Ospidéal Sir Patrick Dun,
Sráid na Canálach Móire Íochtarach.
Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 P667

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Ms. Pauline Tully, TD,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

23rd February 2024

PQ 57303/24*To ask the Minister for Health if, in line with Action 90 of the Autism Committee's Final Report, he has plans to formulate guidelines for autism-friendly service design and built environment design within health services, including general practice, physiotherapy, dentistry and mental health services; and the estimated first- and full-year cost, respectively, of implementing this proposal. -Pauline Tully

Dear Deputy Tully,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. Due to the recent industrial action by management and administrative grade staff in Forsa union in the HSE, there were delays in the processing and answering of Parliamentary Questions. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.

This Capital & Estates response will focus on the built environment design and for autism friendly buildings within the HSE. The formulation of guidelines for autism-friendly service falls under the remit of our service colleagues.

There are no particular national standards relating to autism-friendly environments but the HSE has embedded inclusivity in the processes for procuring buildings and providing autism-friendly environments. All buildings, whether designed and constructed by the HSE or by other parties on behalf of the HSE, are based on Universal Design principles which ensures that the designs are autism-friendly.



Universal Design is the design of an environment so it can be accessed, understood and used by the greatest extent by all people regardless of age, size, ability or disability. The Universal Design approach caters for a broad range of people with diverse abilities within the neurodiversity spectrum. The intention is to facilitate the broadest range of users without the need for specialist adaption or modification to suit the particular requirements of one cohort. It includes a balance between the special demands of various users.

In the provision of accommodation, the HSE ensures compliance with:

1. The Building Regulations (which apply to all buildings including new buildings and refurbishments/retrofits)
2. 'Buildings for Everyone' and other advice from the National Disability Authority and also the National Disability Strategy 2017-21
3. Universal Design principles as championed by the Centre in Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD).

All of these allow buildings to be inclusive and also autism-.

The HSE National HR Capability and Culture group are in the process of preparing *A Guideline on Reasonable Accommodation* to facilitate staff in HSE buildings and this would include those who have autism.

HSE buildings are designed to be inclusive so that they can be used efficiently and comfortably by a broad range of users including those who have autism.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian O'Connell".

Brian O'Connell
Interim National Director
Capital & Estates