



**Oifig an Stiúrthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,**  
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta,  
An Chéad Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15,  
Áras Phlásóg na Rós, Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile,  
Páirc Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta,  
Caladh an Treoigh,  
Luimneach.

**Office of the Assistant National Director,**  
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23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024

Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor,  
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Dear Deputy Murnane O'Connor,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary question, which was submitted to this department for response.

**PQ: 31962/24**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if grant funding will be extended to a children's service (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Details supplied: Down Syndrome Ireland along with many branches of the organisation around the country applied for funding under the HSC Children's Disability Service Grant Fund. The HSE has advised that the application for funding for Down Syndrome Ireland and a number of branches has been unsuccessful. There is a clear need for this funding in the branches and they are asking on what criteria these applications were rejected and if there's a possibility of having the decisions reviewed if funding can be allocated to them for their important work.

**HSE Response**

The Children's Disability Services Grant Fund was open to organisations, including community groups and service providers, with the aim of supporting children on a waiting list for Children's Disability Network Team services and adding value to existing HSE children's disability services.

There was a huge response from voluntary and community groups and private agencies to our call for submissions for the Grant Fund, with over 500 applications for funding, ranging from proposals for several thousand euro to larger projects seeking up to three million euro over three years. The total funding sought amounted to almost €45 million.

The very high number of applications meant that there was strong competition for finite funds.

A CDS Grant Scheme Evaluation Panel was formed to assess all applications based on the following criteria:



- Quality and coherence of proposal;
- Contribution to wellbeing of children and families;
- Potential lasting impact;
- Capacity and sustainability of providers to deliver person-centred services and comply with standards;
- Value for money.

The Evaluation Panel also agreed the following:

- 1) The purpose of the fund was to set up a framework of service providers from which CDNMs would draw down supports for children waitlisted for their CDNT whilst they wait to receive CDNT services. Satisfying this objective would therefore be a primary consideration. This ruled out proposals which were not open to new children being referred by a CDNMs, such as a school wishing to enhance services for their students or an additional service for current CDNT or respite service users.
- 2) The initiative was primarily for children waitlisted for the CDNT rather than children actively attending the CDNT.
- 3) Many proposals either referred to fees or did not make clear that they would offer their service free to families. A CDNMs could not refer a child and family to a service that would require them to pay a fee.

As a first step, the members of the Evaluation Panel individually reviewed applications in their assigned categories and made a preliminary recommendation as to whether the proposal should be shortlisted. The Panel then met to go through each application and decide jointly whether to shortlist.

The main reasons for proposals not being shortlisted included the following:

- Not open to children on a CDNT Waiting List;
- Would require parents to pay a fee for services;
- Poor value for money;
- Lack of governance and risk e.g. sensory equipment with no clinical oversight, groups or programmes which would require prior assessment by a health professional;
- Insufficient information.

Due to the sheer volume of applications and the additional administrative work involved in co-ordinating and collating the proposals, we had to revise the anticipated time-frame for the assessment process and the award of funding to successful proposals.

The Evaluation Panel was pleased to see the diverse and innovative services and supports that local and national groups are providing for children with disabilities and was impressed with the range of opportunities they give for children with disabilities to participate in social and community life.

A shortlist had to be drawn from the large number of projects and initiatives that we received.

A total of 52 projects throughout the Republic of Ireland were chosen to receive funding under the Children's Disability Services Grant Fund, with a number of the larger projects to be funded over a three year cycle.

We had quite a few applications for funding from branches of Down Syndrome Ireland throughout the country and were not in a position to support them all. Seven such projects were shortlisted to receive funding under the Children's Disability Services Grant Fund.

Applicants that were not shortlisted to receive funding were informed that their application was not successful on this occasion, but that we would keep their proposal on file in the event that funding for a similar scheme becomes available in the future.

We have also contacted shortlisted applicants to inform them that we are currently in discussions with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to agree the final allocation to the grant fund. We hope to have a decision shortly and will then be contacting them again to outline the process of engagement with the HSE around the drawdown of funding to be allocated and the financial and governance requirements in relation to the delivery of projects.



We would like to sincerely thank all of the applicants for their interest in the Children's Disability Services Grant Fund and for the work that went into preparing their respective proposals. Regrettably, with limited funds at our disposal, we were not able to fund as many of the projects that we would have liked to support.

Yours Sincerely,

*Bernard O'Regan*

**Bernard O'Regan**  
**Assistant National Director**  
**National Disability Team**

