



Right Care

RIGHT PLACE

Right Time



Call for Funding to Begin to
Tackle the Regional Inequity
in Access to Neurology and
Neurorehabilitation Services

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2025

JUNE 2024

Access to Neurological Care should not depend on where you live

Neurological conditions now represent the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide¹

According to the World Health Organisation one in three of us will develop a neurological condition at some point in our lifetime²

Over 860,000 Irish people are living with a neurological condition, 50,000 people are diagnosed with a neurological condition each year³.

Recent Budgets have seen welcome investment in neurology and neurorehabilitation services, but more needs to be done to continue to address significant gaps in services and deliver on key commitments within the current Programme for Government.

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI), the national umbrella for over 30 neurological charities, is concerned that there continues to be a stark regional inequity in access to critical neurological care services depending on where you live.

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI), the national umbrella for over thirty neurological charities, is calling for the following investment in neurological care services in this year's Budget to begin to tackle the regional inequity in access to neurology and neurorehabilitation services

Funding to complete the rollout of community neurorehabilitation team in each of the 9 CHOs around the country as outlined in the National Neurorehabilitation Strategy: a key commitment in the current Programme for Government.

Funding for 5 Consultant Neurology posts to provide urgently needed dedicated neurology services in the following regional hospitals: Bantry, Letterkenny, Wexford, Mayo and Portlaoise.

¹ Steinmetz et al (2024) Global regional and national burden of disorders affecting the nervous system 1990-2021: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021. *Lancet Neurology* Vol 23, Issue 4 Pages 344-381

² WHO Position Paper (August 2022): *Optimising Brain Health Across the Life Course*: World Health Organisation

³ Model of Care for Neurology Services in Ireland (2016) Health Services Executive & Royal College of Physicians Ireland

Ask 1

Ensure Equal Access To a Community Neurorehabilitation Team Across The Country

BY

Providing funding in this year's Budget to complete the rollout of community neurorehabilitation team in each of the 9 CHOs (Community Healthcare Areas) around the country as outlined in the National Neurorehabilitation Strategy: a key commitment in the current Programme for Government.

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Funding for a fully staffed community neurorehabilitation team in CHOs 1,3,5 and 8

Community neurorehabilitation teams provide crucial short-term intensive rehabilitation input (up to 12 weeks) with access to multidisciplinary services including physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, social work and neuropsychology. The service they provide is critical to preventing disability and promoting recovery for people with neurological conditions,

reducing hospital stays and the need for frequent hospital admissions and long term care.

A three year Implementation Framework for the National Neurorehabilitation Strategy 2019-2021⁴ committed to establishing one team in each of the nine HSE CHO areas around the country. In a positive step, funding has been provided in

successive Budgets over the past two years to fund community neurorehabilitation teams in CHOs 2, 4, 6, 7 and 9.

However, there remain large areas of the country which neurological patients have no access to a community neurorehabilitation team.

COMMUNITY HEALTH ORGANISATION (CHO) AREA	COUNTIES COVERED	ACCESS TO A COMMUNITY NEUROREHABILITATION TEAM
CHO 1	Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan	TEAM IS SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERSTAFFED The existing team in CHO 1 only has a staff of 3 WTE compared to the 12 posts funded in other teams around the country.
CHO 3	Clare, Limerick, North Tipperary	ONLY HALF THE REQUIRED POSTS FUNDED WITHIN THIS TEAM* leading to lengthy waiting times to access this crucial service
CHO 5	South Tipperary, Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford * Wexford	NO TEAM FUNDED TO DATE
CHO 8	Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Louth, Meath	NO TEAM FUNDED TO DATE

*CHO 3 Team has 7 instead of the recommended 12 WTE

⁴ National Policy & Strategy for the Provision of Neurorehabilitation Services in Ireland: From Theory to Action: Implementation Framework 2019-2021 (February 2019) Health Services Executive

Ask 2

Begin To Address The Lack Of Neurology Services In Our Regional Hospitals

All Model 3 Hospitals in Ireland should have a dedicated outpatient neurology service according to the 2016 National Model of Care for Neurology Services

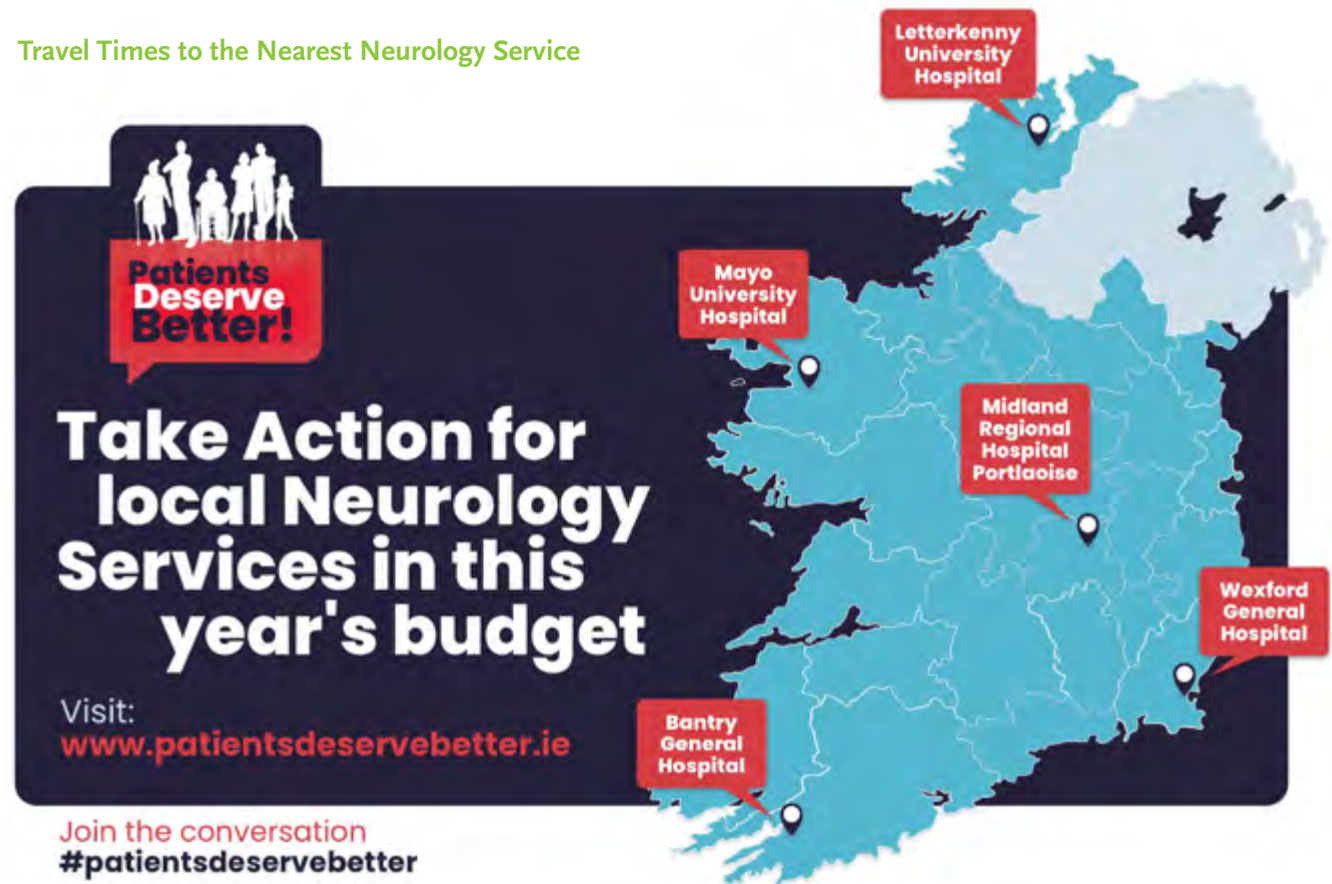
BY

Funding 5 Consultant Neurology posts to provide dedicated neurology services in the following regional hospitals: Bantry, Letterkenny, Wexford, Mayo and Portlaoise.

Access to a Consultant Neurologist should be equally distributed across the country and the care you receive should not depend on where you live yet a number of our regional hospitals across the country continue to lack access to neurology services.

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland has identified 5 hospitals where there is an urgent need to provide dedicated neurology services. Neurological patients in these areas are traveling on average 60-112km to receive care.

Travel Times to the Nearest Neurology Service



HOSPITAL	CURRENT ACCESS TO DEDICATED NEUROLOGY SERVICE	DISTANCE TO NEAREST NEUROLOGY SERVICE	IMPACT
Portlaoise Hospital	No dedicated neurology service despite a proposal agreed and developed in 2020	Tallaght Hospital Dublin (75km)	“Since being diagnosed in the 1980s I have had to travel from Laois to Dublin for neurology services. The journey adds another layer of stress and fatigue” Tony
Bantry Hospital	Existing neurology services in Bantry Hospital have been reduced significantly since May 2024	Cork University Hospital (80km)	“I cannot overemphasise the importance of having a neurology service in Bantry Hospital. It would significantly cut down travel times for neurological patients accessing important services” Ruth
Letterkenny	Current visiting service from Sligo University Hospital is inadequate for the needs of Letterkenny Hospital and is unsustainable for the Sligo service, reducing the cover in Sligo Hospital	Sligo University Hospital (112km)	“Having a local Neurologist in Donegal would benefit me greatly as it would cut out long journeys to Sligo” Elaine
Wexford	No neurology service. Patients are travelling long distances to Waterford and Dublin hospitals. This does not align with the 2016 National Model of Care for Neurology Services which recommends outpatient neurology services in all Model 3 hospitals	University Hospital Waterford (60km)	“Imagine saying goodbye to long journeys, having an accessible neurology service on your doorstep in Wexford could make a huge difference to so many people, myself included” Lorna
Mayo	No neurology service. Patients are travelling long distances to Galway and Sligo hospitals. This does not align with the 2016 Model of Care for Neurology Services which recommends outpatient neurology services in all Model 3 hospitals	University College Hospital Galway (76km)	“Early morning clinic appointment 9am, this in turn is a 4.30am wake up. 1 hour 40 mins without traffic or 2 hrs 30 mins with” Louise

A nationwide survey published by MS Ireland in June 2024 found that nearly one in ten respondents were spending two to three hours travelling (one way) to see their Neurologist, with some spending significantly longer⁵

Sustainability of Not For Profit Providers of Neurological Care Services

The services provided by the not for profit sector are vital and integral to the implementation of policy and delivery of care, to people with neurological conditions and their families throughout Ireland.

The services provided by this sector are under critical threat, demand for these supports is growing and becoming more complex, while at the same time the recruitment and retention issues facing the sector are putting these vital services at serious risk.

Notwithstanding the Government's 8% increase in funding for wages for Section 39 organisations in recent times, huge challenges and inequalities remain.

On behalf of its member organisations providing vital neurological services, NAI is strongly supportive of the sector-wide call for action to address the challenges around pay inequality for Section 39 employees.

About the Neurological Alliance of Ireland

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) brings together over thirty non profit organisations to advocate for the rights of the over 860,000 people in Ireland living with a neurological condition.

Founded in 2003, the NAI advocates for the development of quality services for people with neurological conditions. Our campaigns are rooted in the experience of our members and the people and families with whom they work. We provide a united and expert voice on neurological care through advocacy, policy development and awareness raising.

Further Information

For further information on any aspect of this submission, contact NAI Executive Director Magdalen Rogers: mrogers@nai.ie 086 1216957

List of NAI Members

Acquired Brain injury Ireland

Alzheimer Society of Ireland

An Saol

Aphasia Ireland

Ataxia Foundation Ireland

Aware

Bloomfield Health Services

Cheshire Ireland

Chronic Pain Ireland

Croí

Dublin Neurological Institute

Dystonia Ireland

Early Onset Parkinson's Disease Association (EOPD)

Enable Ireland

Epilepsy Ireland

Headway

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 Association of Ireland

Peamount Healthcare

Polio Survivors Ireland

PSPA Ireland

Slanu Stroke Rehab

Spinal Injuries Ireland

Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland

The Rehab Group

Vision Ireland

Associate Members

Brain Tumour Ireland



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