

DÁIL ÉIREANN

Fógra Tairisceana : Notice of Motion

GNÓ COMHALTAÍ PRÍOBHÁIDEACHA PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

“That Dáil Éireann:

acknowledges that:

- Autism is a ‘spectrum’ condition that affects the typical development of the brain in areas such as social interaction, communication and sensory processing
- The first signs of autism usually appear as developmental delays before the age of 3 and symptoms and characteristics can present themselves in a wide variety of combinations which can range from mild to severe yet it displays no outward physical signs;
- Whilst many people, females as well as males, are diagnosed at a young age, others may not have their autism recognised until a later age;
- Many older autistic adults have never received a diagnosis or any support or assistance from the State;
- The cause of autism is unknown but is generally accepted that autism is caused by differences in brain development;
- In most cases a parent will notice a difference in their child’s language, behaviour or social development. The family GP or Public Health Nurse can then refer the child to a paediatrician who can assess the child’s developmental delay and ultimately a diagnosis can be applied;
- Many of the barriers autistic people face come from how society responds to those with the condition. Unemployment, social exclusion and many mental health challenges arise not from autism but from a lack of understanding, support and accessibility;
- Autistic people, with the right support, can participate meaningfully and make a value contribution to society due to a different way of seeing and understanding the world.

agrees that:

- One in every 65 school pupils or 1.5% of the schools population has a diagnosis of autism; approximately 14,000 students with autism in the school system and this number is significantly higher than previous estimated numbers of one in every 100 students;
- Ireland still awaits an Autism Bill and an Autism Strategy despite an initial Autism Bill being introduced to the Dáil in 2012 and lapsing in 2014 along with a subsequent Autism Bill from the Seanad awaiting its second stage in the Dáil since July 2017;
- Autism is recognised to be a heterogenous group of conditions and consequently there are large variations in individual profiles. Service delivery needs to take account of both the heterogeneity within the spectrum and of the lifelong nature of the condition and recognise that needs change with age;

- Early diagnosis and appropriate supports is the key and ensures that people are enabled to develop strategies that make life easier rather than more difficult for themselves and for those with whom they live and early intervention aims to develop skills in the core areas of communication, social interaction and imagination that underpin adaptive functioning in order to provide the person with the highest possible quality of life;
- ASC services should ensure individuals will receive their health services as close to their home as possible
- Services should be delivered using a multi-disciplinary model including Primary Care Teams (PCT), specialist Disability or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and sub specialist autism specific services at health and social care network level;
- The current range of services are not available consistently across areas and are not accessible to everyone on the spectrum
- Greater multi-agency co-ordination is required to provide clear pathways for individuals and their families;
- Autism supports and care are required throughout the whole of one's life cycle and should be provided on the basis of individual needs;
- Autistic people do not just need clinical supports but also employment opportunities, access to quality advice when making critical life decisions, social opportunities and autism-friendly public services.
- More must be done to create an accepting society which celebrates autistic people for who they are.

calls for:

- An All-Party Oireachtas Committee on Autism to be set up in the immediate term;
- This committee to be tasked with developing and publishing a comprehensive Autism Empowerment Strategy within a six month period;
- The Committee to be mandated to hear directly from autistic people and their families;
- The Minister for Health Simon Harris TD to publish the findings of the *Review of Operational Effectiveness of Existing Health Services' Responses in Addressing the Particular Needs of Those with Autism Spectrum Disorder*, which was to be published in September 2017, in advance of the All-Party Oireachtas Committee being set up;
- Legislation to be drafted and introduced to compliment and underpin the publishing of an Autism Empowerment Strategy and to give this strategy statutory footing;
- The establishment of a multi-disciplinary Task Force including autistic individuals and or their family members to oversee the rollout of an Autism Empowerment Strategy and monitor legislative oversight;
- A review of NCSE policy with regard to provision of Autism classes at primary and post-primary level;
- A consultation with disability groups and educational stakeholders on the full implementation of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004, with a view to full implementation, would be undertaken at the earliest opportunity;
- An urgent review of supports available for autistic adults throughout the life cycle

- That an all-island approach would be attributed to the development of any strategy, noting the positive work that the Middletown Centre for Autism has contributed to autism services since its establishment in 2007 as a body funded by both North and South institutions -

Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Mary Lou McDonald, Gerry Adams, John Brady, Pat Buckley, Seán Crowe, David Cullinane, Pearse Doherty, Dessie Ellis, Martin J. Ferris, Kathleen Funchion, Martin Kenny, Denise Mitchell, Imelda Munster, Jonathan O'Brien, Eoin Ó Broin, Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire, Louise O'Reilly, Aengus Ó Snodaigh, Maurice Quinlivan, Brian Stanley.