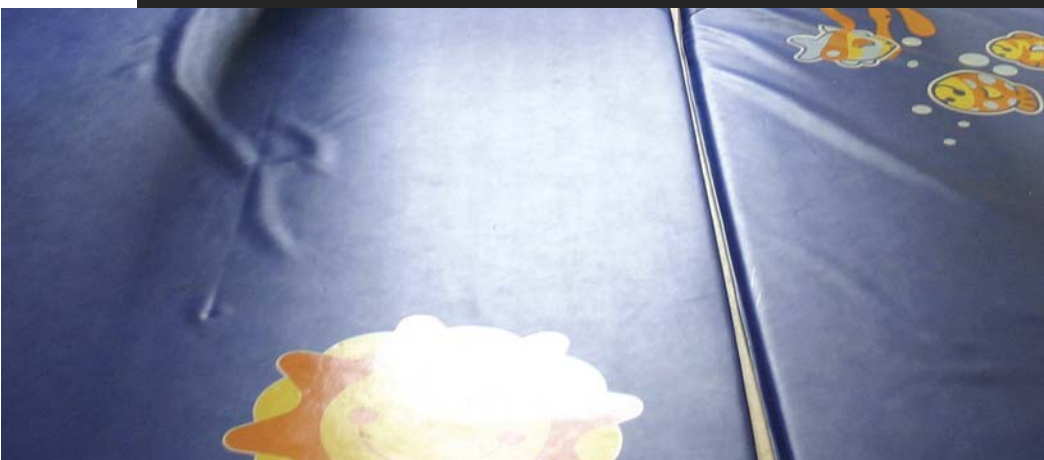




You and Limerick Children's Services





INTRODUCTION

Limerick Children's Services is a partnership between the Health Service Executive (HSE), Brothers of Charity Services Limerick, Enable Ireland, St. Gabriel's and St. Joseph's Foundation. The partnership provides children's services in the Limerick city and county areas to children with moderate to profound intellectual disabilities. It also provides services to children who have physical or sensory disabilities.

There are four Children's Services teams serving Limerick City & County

The Limerick Children's Services Management Group is made up of:

- the Area Manager for Disabilities, HSE (The Chairperson);
- another HSE representative, nominated by the Chairperson;
- the Service Managers and Administrators for Enable Ireland, the Brothers of Charity and St. Gabriel's;
- the Service Manager for St. Joseph's Foundation.

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to provide a range of family centred services to children with disabilities and/or developmental delay.



Once your child has been accepted by the service, a member of the team will contact you to arrange an appointment to complete a pre-screening form. This involves taking details of your child's developmental history and their current needs.

Your child will then be assessed at a team screening. This involves a number of therapists from the team working together to assess your child. They will identify your child's needs and make a plan of action.

Areas for development may include:

- speech and language development - talking and communicating;
- social development - how your child gets on with others;
- emotional development - how your child feels in different situations;
- cognitive development - how your child thinks, understands and concentrates;
- gross and fine motor development - how your child uses large muscles and small muscles;
- adaptive skills (for example, feeding and dressing) from an early age.

Intervention may be given to your child on a one-to-one basis or they may be paired with another child or placed in a group. All therapy is aimed at equipping you, the parent, to keep working with your child at home. We can help you to do this with home programmes. Training Programmes are an integral part of our service, programmes are internationally approved and the team members are trained as facilitators.

The Children's Services team works closely with other people and organisations involved in your child's care and development who help to provide the therapy programmes. The team meets with preschool assistants, special needs assistants, paediatricians, area medical officers, public health nurses, GPs, community care speech and language therapists, preschools and schools.



If necessary, the team can arrange appointments for your child with other agencies such as the community specialist nursing team, child and adolescent mental health services, the Butterfly Club (a club based in Rathkeale and Abbeyfeale that offers recreational activities for children with developmental needs), parents support groups and mid-west family support/respite services.

The team will also:

- welcome your involvement as they consider you the most important member of the team working with your child;
- where appropriate, provide a keyworker to help coordinate services for your child. You can contact the keyworker if you have questions or queries about any aspect of your child's involvement with the service;
- provide therapy for your child in a setting that suits them - for example, at home, at school or at the Children's Services centre;
- develop an individual education plan for your child in conjunction with preschools and school. This is a plan for school staff which tells them how best to help your child reach their full potential in school;
- provide support and information about helping your child to settle in preschool or school.

Team Members:

The teams are made up of the following professionals:

- social worker
- clinical psychologist
- occupational therapist
- physiotherapist
- speech and language therapist
- early intervention specialist
- manager
- administrator
- clerical officer



WHAT WE ASK YOU TO DO

In order to help us give your child the best possible service, we ask parents to:

- attend any group or individual sessions agreed by the team and your family;
- carry out the activities and the programmes recommended by the team as part of your child's daily routine;
- share ideas and information with us that will help us to organise the best programme for your child;
- tell us if you are going to be late or if you can't keep an appointment. If you keep missing appointments without letting us know, it could mean we have to withdraw the service.
- talk to your keyworker or therapist if you have any queries or concerns about the service;
- tell us if your child is having any private therapy;
- treat all team members with courtesy and respect.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Our aim is to achieve the best outcomes for your child.

If you miss appointments without letting us know, it causes two main difficulties:

1. Your child's development could be affected, and
2. It causes a delay in delivering a service to other children.

If you can't attend appointments with the Limerick Children's Services, we might be able to help you. We can be flexible with appointment times or we might be able to arrange appointments in your home or at school. If you have transport or money problems that are stopping you from attending appointments, we might be able to get you some help.



If you continue to miss appointments, we will have to look at the needs of other children and we may have to make a decision to stop providing the service for your child. This means that your child's needs might not be met. Your child will not get the help they need to develop in the best possible way.

If we decide to stop providing the service for your child, we then have to decide how this will affect your child's development. Either Limerick Children's Services or the doctor or public health nurse who referred you will make this decision. If it is decided that your child's development will be "significantly impaired" (badly affected) by not attending the service, the Child Protection Social Work team, who are part of the HSE, will be notified. By law, we are obliged to do this.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is very important to everyone on the team. All information that you share with the team about your child and your family is completely private and will not be discussed with anyone outside the team without your permission. Therefore, we assure parents and families that their personal information is treated with sensitivity and remains confidential to the team.

However, there are some situations when we are required by law to pass on information to the relevant authorities (for example, the HSE or Gardaí), this is because we have a duty to make sure that all the children we see are safe and protected from harm.

We must pass on information to the authorities if:

- there is evidence or reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected;
- a child or family member tells us they intend to harm themselves or harm someone else.

The Disability Act

The Disability Act of 2005 sets out a new approach to assessing the needs of people with disabilities. This is called the Assessment of Need (AON). Since 1 June 2007, children under the age of five are entitled to apply for an AON no matter what it costs or the capacity to provide the service they might need. The new rule applies to very young children because getting help early in life can help to lessen the disability in later life.

Children under the age of five now have a right in law to:

- have an independent assessment of their health and educational needs;
- get a report of the assessment;
- get a statement of the services they will receive;
- make a complaint if they are not happy with any part of the process.

Complaints

Limerick Children's Services try to provide the best possible services to children and their families. We encourage families who use our services to let us know if they have a complaint. A complaint is defined as, "an expression of dissatisfaction which needs a response." A complaint might include concerns that standards of care, treatment and practice are not as good as they should be.

Limerick Children's Services invite any complaints you have and we view them as opportunities for us to learn and to improve our services. We try to work in a spirit of co-operation and openness and we assure our families that if they inform us of any concerns or complaints, we will do our best to resolve them.

Limerick Children's Services have a Complaints Policy which can be provided on request.

Limerick Children's Services comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2003



What does the Early Intervention Specialist do?





WHAT DOES THE EARLY INTERVENTION SPECIALIST DO?

The Early Intervention Specialist (EIS) uses play as a way to assess your child and to introduce therapy. In your child's early years, play is central to development. Play is the child's world - it is the way a child interacts and learns best. Play reveals the child's current abilities and interests. Play is where different areas of your child's development all come together.

The early intervention specialists is qualified and experienced in early education and special education.

The early intervention specialist will:

- work with you to set developmental goals that suit your child's play both at home and within specialised centres;
- liaise with your child's preschool and primary school to encourage them to include your child as much as possible;
- adapt learning methods, toys, and environments to help maximise your child's potential.





What does the Social Worker do?





WHAT DOES THE SOCIAL WORKER DO?

The social worker is there to support you and to make sure you have all the information you need to help your child.

The social worker will:

- assess your family strengths, resources, and needs;
- help you to access family support and respite services;
- provide counselling and support;
- tell you about allowances, entitlements, housing options that you and your child may be legally entitled to;
- help you and the other team members to develop an individual plan for your child;
- advise you and help you with your own parenting programme;
- support and encourage your family and your child to participate in community activities;
- facilitate intervention groups.





What does the Clinical Psychologist do?





WHAT DOES THE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST DO?

The clinical psychologist provides assessment of children's cognitive abilities (for example, thinking, understanding, attention, reasoning and learning) and emotional well-being. The clinical Psychologist provides therapeutic programmes and will also offer advice and support to parents and other family members on the emotional impact of caring for a child with special needs.

The clinical psychologist will:

- assess your child's learning abilities, skills and behaviour;
- decide what to include in the assessment – for instance, assessment might include standardised tests, interviews with parents, questionnaires for parents or teachers, observation of the child and consultation with other team members, teachers or other services who work with children.
- meet with you, the parents, once an assessment is complete to give you feedback about findings and recommendations;
- support you and your family in coming to terms with your child's disability or diagnosis;
- offer recommendations for pre-school or school placements and advise what supports, resources or special services might help your child;
- offer recommendations to you about how best to meet your child's needs and support their development.

Therapeutic work might be helpful for issues such as: adjustment to a disability, challenging behaviour, emotional difficulties, parent-child relationships or relationships with brothers and sisters.

Psychologists can also help with issues such as sleeping routines, eating habits, toileting difficulties, social problems and planning for the future.





What does the Occupational Therapist do?





WHAT DOES THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST DO?

The occupational therapist focuses on your child's ability to carry out daily activities in the areas of self care (including dressing, feeding and toileting), productivity (play and education) and leisure (games and activities for enjoyment).

The occupational therapist will:

- assess your child's sensory functions - how your child processes and organises sensory information from their body and environment, for example, their reactions to touch and movement;
- assess your child's motor skills - that is, your child's muscle tone, posture, movement, hand/eye co-ordination;
- assess your child's cognitive function - that is, their ability to pay attention, solve problems, remember and use new skills;
- help your child with certain skills, for example hand-writing, dressing, feeding, co-ordination;
- make recommendations about specialist equipment that may be provided for physical needs or sensory needs, for example seating, toilet facilities and so on. If necessary, the occupational therapist will make contact with specialist seating clinics;
- give advice on useful technology for special needs - for example, accessing computers using adapted keyboards, specialist software;
- give advice on environmental adaptations in the home and school, for example wheelchair accessibility.





What does the Physiotherapist do?





WHAT DOES THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST DO?

The physiotherapist aims to provide a timely and effective service to children with delayed movement development, physical disability and problems based on movement, balance and co-ordination. The physiotherapist is concerned with developing your child's ability to move and achieve motor milestones. The physiotherapist also helps with good posture and the use of muscles.

The physiotherapist will:

- complete a formal physiotherapy assessment on your child;
- help with an orthotic assessment. An orthotic assessment assesses a child's footwear to see if a child would benefit from splints/insoles or any other equipment that would help their posture or walking. It is carried out by an orthotist and the physiotherapist;
- assess your child's equipment needs (for example, standing frames, sleep systems, seating system). Following this assessment the physiotherapist will tell you if any equipment is recommended and, with your permission, they will apply to the HSE for funding for this equipment. If your child has a medical card or a long-term disability card, any recommended equipment may be funded by the HSE. If your child does not have one of these cards, you would have to pay for any equipment recommended yourself;
- offer advice on gross motor/postural programmes. These programmes identify activities aimed at helping a child's gross motor function (large muscle movement).
- offer advice on overall developmental programmes;
- help to run various group programmes throughout the year some of which might suit your child;
- provide hydrotherapy (physiotherapy in a water pool) if it's suitable for your child. This can help work on co-ordination, strength and good posture.





What does the Speech & Language
Therapist do?





WHAT DOES THE SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPIST DO?

The speech and language therapist helps your child to develop communication and feeding skills to their full potential. They focus in particular on: social interaction skills; understanding and using language; speech and articulation; and eating, drinking and swallowing skills. The use of non speech communication systems such as signs, gestures, pictures and computerised aids are sometimes used.

The speech and language therapist will:

- complete a formal assessment of your child's speech, mouth movements, and listening and speaking skills;
- provide individual speech and language therapy sessions for your child;
- develop preschool communication programmes;
- recommend the best programme to develop your child's communication skills;
- run training courses for you, the parents, (and staff, for example, teachers) on how to develop your child's communication ability.

