

Ballymun Children's Disability Network Team Newsletter



December 2023

Message from the Children's Disability Network Manager

I hope you and your family are keeping well and the transitions to school went well. I know a few children had a difficult start and the team responded to support them. School transitions is one of the most prominent topics for many families whether it's starting primary or secondary school. We recently ran an advice clinic for secondary school transitions, and plan to do the same for those transitioning to primary school in September 2024. Ballymun families were offered to attend a meeting with the SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser) on the 8th of November 2023 and unfortunately only a few could attend.

We still have 2 SLT vacancies, these positions are advertised on ongoing basis, but to date we have had limited success due to there being a national shortage of qualified SLT's in the country. We also have a Physiotherapist on maternity leave till February 2024. While this affects the teams capacity, everyone is working really hard to make sure we can still provide as much service as we can.

Ballymun Family Forum

We held our second Ballymun Family Forum on the 26th of September 2023. I was glad to meet some new parents, but it was also great to see those who came back again. I provided updates on the team and changes we have made since the first forum. I explained the difference between Primary Care level services and Children's Disability Network Teams services. Tina Fagan, our Ballymun Family Representative was also present and was able answer some of the questions from parents. Parents were also able to have a chat and share some ideas for future meetings.

We are planning to run three Family Forum meetings in 2024, and as suggested by families, invite guest speakers on topics of most interest to the families. We are meeting in December and January to plan out sessions and as soon as I know the dates I will communicate them.

Pediatric Services – How to support my child in pre-school and school? Difference between AIMS and SENO

Tina Fagan, one of our Family Representative, advised that parents are looking for information on supporting children in preschool as well as school, to provide some advice on the difference between AIMS and SENO. We decided to dedicate some space on this topic in the newsletter.

AIMS is for Pre-school level

Access Inclusion Model (AIM) aspires to support parents, pre-schools to ensure children with a variety of needs have equal and quality access to early learning settings. AIM supports are provided through the ECCE programme. There are 7 levels of supports with 1 being more generic and 7 being unique to the child.

Such supports can be universal where the whole pre-school approach is designed to provide an inclusive environment. For example, pre-school staff may avail of training programmes on the use of sign language, or sensory processing to support children better. You can read more here: <https://aim.gov.ie/aim-supports/universal-supports/>

There are also *targeted* supports, which cater for a wide range of abilities with a more narrow focus on specific needs of the child. For example, specialist equipment or appliances (Level 5), minor building alterations (level 7), therapeutic intervention (from CDNT or Primary Care) or, in a small number of cases, extra assistance in the pre-school room (Level 5-7). You can read more here: <https://aim.gov.ie/aim-supports/targeted-supports/>

Key-points:

- Your child does not need a diagnosis to access AIM.
- **Every pre-school can apply to AIM, and it is their responsibility to do so.**
- Staff can avail of a variety of training through AIM to support your child.
- AIM does not fund Special Needs Assistants (SNA), but staff ratio can be adjusted through application for additional funding.
- CDNT will be informed of the AIM application.

If the child is open to Ballymun CDNT, our Early Intervention Specialist will be working closely with the pre-school staff and the family to support the child.

If the child is on the waiting list, our team may provide a consultation to pre-school to direct them what supports are needed to ensure the environment promotes inclusion and stimulates child participation. Please note this is not a pathway for your child to be open sooner by the CDNT.

You can find comprehensive information here: <https://aim.gov.ie/parents/>

SENO is for Primary and Post-Primary support

Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENO) is the key link between your child and suitable educational setting. SENOs interact with parents and schools and liaise with the HSE in providing resources to support children with special educational needs. Specifically,

- SENOs support families by providing information, establishing special classes and engaging with other professionals working with your child.
- SENOs advise and support parents around the availability of special classes, special schools and other educational supports.
- SENOs process Transport and Assistive Technology applications and forward to the Department of Education for sanction.
- SENOs provide parents with advice and useful tips on transition from preschool to school from primary school to post primary school and onto adult services.

Our CDNT plays an important role in supporting school transitions:

- Webinars and advice clinics for parents on the processes and documentation required to access specific educational setting such as, mainstream school, ASD class or special education school (for both open and wait list children)
- Provide relevant assessments and documentation to apply to schools. The process is informed by the child's needs and type of school they require (open list)
- Webinars for children going into secondary schools
- Supports to schools and children to ensure smooth settling in period
- Our team do not apply, or allocate school placements

Key-points:

- Inform SENO as soon as you think your child will require additional educational supports
- Parents hold sole responsibility to apply to schools
- **CDNT has no role in school allocations, nor can they influence any decisions of SENO or School Principal's**
- Inform CDNT on when your child is due to transition to primary or secondary school

A list of SENOs and contact details can be found here: <https://ncse.ie/seno-contact-information> The majority of the schools in Ballymun area are covered by Elaine Stacey at 01-6033428, or elaine.stacey@ncse.ie

How Families Can Help Us Improve Services

Missed Appointments

We know life is busy and unpredictable and can be even more challenging when you are parenting a child with additional needs. Unfortunately, 20-30% of appointments offered by our team are not attended. We have put a number of supports for the parents such as posting a letter, confirming the appointment via text or phone call 24 hours in advance. However, we encounter non-attendance even for confirmed appointments. This affects team productivity and extends time children are waiting to be seen when they are open to the team and affects those who are on the waiting list. We understand there are many family, personal, childcare, health reasons why this may happen. We are taking it all into account and will try to support you as much as possible, but we have to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity. From January 2024 you will be receiving letters outlining a number of your appointments, any missed appointments will not be rescheduled to make sure other children waiting are not affected. Please give us a call if you cannot make your appointments as soon as you receive such letter, and we will accommodate the changes needed. This will enable us to offer the appointment to another child or family. In the context of our team vacancies, this is essential to make sure we are using the resources we have as effectively as we can.

Our administrative team reviewed the statistic in relation to missed appointments:

January to October 2023:

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| Number of Appointments Offered | 3,144 |
| Number of Appointments Attended | 2,593 |
| Number that Did Not Attend | 361 |
| Number that Could Not Attend | 190 |
| Total number of missed appointments: | 551 |

Example at Recent Clinics

- Sleep Clinics (50% missed)
- Emotional Regulation (50% missed)
- Autism Group (55% missed)
- Hanen More Than Words (64% missed)

We have brought this issue to the family forum and family representatives to seek the families' perspective on this as well.

As per the national policies on engagement with families and national access policy, if a family has had x3 missed appointments with no prior agreement with the team, or have a pattern of missed and canceled appointments, we will have to discharge such family and may require notifying TUSLA of poor engagement. The policies can be found here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/progressing-disability/pds-programme/documents/>

If you need to cancel or postpone an appointment with a member of our team, please contact us by email cdntballymun@smh.ie or call us on **086 0358659**.

Team Intervention Spotlight

Our team along with other teams in St. Michael's House are continuing to develop a variety of pathways to make sure that we provide evidence based, up to date interventions in the most consistent way. All interventions are offered based on the goals that are relevant to your child, which you set with your keyworker.

Sleep Clinic

Many children with disabilities or complex needs experience sleep difficulties. Sleep problems in children are associated with behaviour issues, poor adaptive functioning in daily skills and motor development. The CDNT, CAMHS ID and medical teams in St. Michael's House worked together to develop an interdisciplinary clinic to support the children and their families in addressing the needs around sleep. A number of support systems resulted from this work such as:

- Sleep booklet: day-time routines, bedroom environment, evening routines, etc
- Sleep Kit: www.smh.ie/services/sleep-kit1/
- Sleep advice clinic

The sleep advice clinic is the place where you can meet a range of professionals such as psychologist, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, paediatrician, clinical nurse specialist and others. Who you will need to see will depend on your child's needs, their complexity and strategies tried in the past. This is a truly pioneering way of working on sleep and our team members are bringing it to the attention of other professional through sharing their knowledge through study days at local and national levels. We received the following feedback from those families who attended:

- 100% would like to come again
- 100% would recommend to a friend

Sadly, staggering 50% of the appointments were not attended despite confirming that they would.

Getting Ready for the Festive Season

Christmas, New Year and other celebrations are meant to be joyful and happy times with the family. We recognise that for some children change in routine, bright and loud environments can be overwhelming. We decided to include emotional cards, a social story about the Christmas Break and a social story about Santa visiting. These were developed by our therapists to support you and your children.

We hope you will all have a lovely break and would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter, we hope you found it useful.
Please provide any feedback or any ideas for future editions to cdntballymun@smh.ie