



Sensational Kids Submits Capital Funding Proposal to HSE for completion of the National Child Development Centre, Kildare Town, Kildare

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Our children are our future. We all love our children and would do anything for them. In Ireland we pride ourselves on how we as a society provide for our 1.68 million children through our education, welfare and healthcare systems.

Yet we know there is so much more to be done to enable all our children to reach their potential. And for some children, we are failing them badly: 1 in 4 children has a special educational need (that's 292,000 children) and there are over 119,00 children waiting for disability supports and services.

And all the while the HSE's Access Policy states that no child is left without timely access to an appropriate service to meet their needs. It is clear we are not meeting our targets or our obligations to our children.

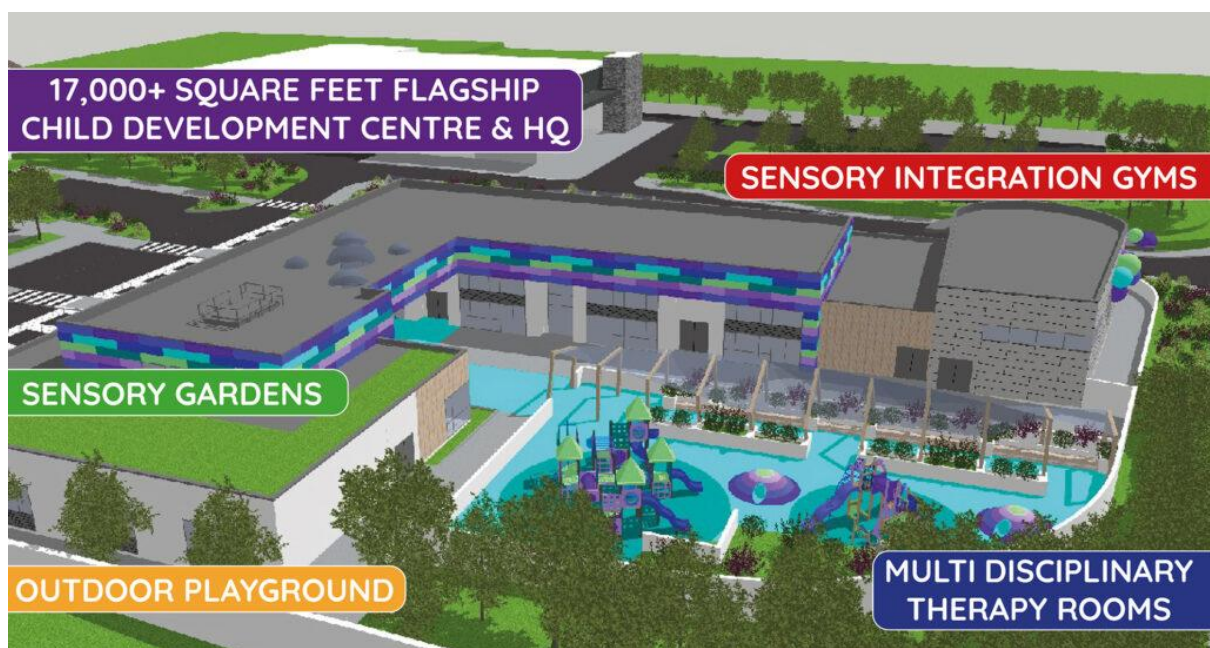
This is where the ***National Child Development Centre*** comes in. The centre will be *Ireland's first purpose-built facility dedicated to delivering comprehensive diagnostic assessments and evidence-based therapies for children with disabilities and neurodivergent profiles*. The centre will begin the job of ensuring that children will receive timely access to services to meet their needs and that in time Ireland becomes a world leader in services and therapies for children. Specifically, the centre aims to support over 300 children per week, providing 13,000 therapy sessions – including occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, psychological assessments and play therapy - annually for children in need who are currently on lengthy waiting lists.



WHAT?

The **National Child Development Centre** in Kildare Town will address critical service gaps for children with development needs and align seamlessly with national and local strategic frameworks, supporting the broader objectives of balanced regional development, enhanced quality of life, and sustainable, decentralised growth.

The Centre will be a purpose-built facility designed to support paediatric therapies while also serving as an inclusive community resource and will constitute a major investment in disability services. Crucially, it will address the key priority placed on children's disability support services explicitly laid out in the new Programme for Government.





WHY?

Comprehensive analysis indicates that our societal failing of children with developmental needs is based on 10 drivers, each of which will be significantly addressed by the **National**

Child Development Centre:

Need	Outcome
1. Urgent need for child development services due to 119,000+ children on waiting lists for psychology, speech & language, occupational therapy and assessments in Ireland	New National Child Development Centre (NCDC) in Kildare, increasing service capacity and reducing wait times. Target to serve 30,000 children over 10 years
2. Lack of accessible, affordable therapy services for children with special educational needs, leaving many without timely intervention	Expanded access to occupational therapy, speech & language therapy, psychology and play therapy across multiple centres in Ireland, reducing service gaps
3. High financial burden on families seeking private therapy services, making necessary interventions unaffordable for many.	Families have been saved over €4 million in therapy fees since 2008, the centre will provide access regardless of financial status
4. Shortage of trained therapists and child development professionals, impacting the availability of high-quality services	Increased workforce training and partnerships with third-level institutions to address therapist shortages, leading to sustainable service growth
5. Limited integration of timely intervention strategies within educational settings, delaying crucial support for children	Enhanced timely intervention programs integrated with schools, supporting timely developmental assistance for children
6. Deficiency in specialised infrastructure tailored for child therapy, including sensory integration gyms and multi-disciplinary therapy rooms	17,000+ square feet flagship facility equipped with sensory integration gyms, therapy rooms, and outdoor play areas to support specialised therapy
7. Need for a national centre of excellence for child development to standardise and improve service delivery across Ireland	Establishment of a benchmark national facility to lead child development initiatives, research, and professional training in Ireland
8. Requirement for additional clinical capacity to cater to increasing demand for therapy sessions and assessments	Projected therapy session increase from 8,966 in 2023 to 16,279 in 2026, significantly improving access to developmental support
9. Increasing necessity for technology-enabled therapy solutions, including online therapy and remote consultations	Introduction of online therapy and e-learning platforms to ensure wider access to specialised therapeutic interventions
10. Urgent need to improve parental education and professional development for educators in child developmental therapies.	Provision of training programs, workshops, and webinars benefiting over 500 professionals annually, enhancing national expertise in child development.



HOW?

The **National Child Development Centre** (NCDC) will address these drivers by

- reducing identified capacity deficits in current infrastructure, based on user demand, and current waiting list data and ensure flexibility to respond to future demand.
- acting as a catalyst for reform of the Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) in line with the *Action Plan for Disability*, the *National Policy Framework for Children and Young People* and the *HSE Service Delivery Plan*.
- supporting the role of third level education in training future therapists and staff in the sector and address regional and national skills gaps identified in the *Programme for Government* and by third level institutions.
- fostering inclusion through high quality infrastructure, in line with universal design principles, and to facilitate our services and operation.
- bridging the gap in the availability of assessments and ongoing supports.
- exemplifying best practice in children's disability services and creating a new model for care and support based on user needs and feedback.
- promoting sustainable development principles and advancing the attainment of climate action targets.
- contributing to achieving national targets by seamlessly aligning with key national and regional strategies including:
 - a. The Action Plan for Disability 2024-2026 (emphasising early intervention, multi-disciplinary / family-centred approaches and workforce development).
 - b. The HSE Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023-2026 (addressing service gaps and regional imbalances).
 - c. Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan (promoting decentralised healthcare infrastructure).



WHERE AND WHEN?

Following receiving planning permission and securing a 2.4-acre site in Kildare Town, Kildare (carefully located for national accessibility), building work commenced in May 2024 on the 17,000 sq ft state-of-the-art **National Child Development Centre** designed to support paediatric therapies while also serving as an inclusive community resource. The centre's design is guided by universal access principles, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of children, their families, and the wider community. Key features of the design include:

- Accessibility and Navigation
- Sensory-Friendly Environment
- Therapeutic Spaces
- Flexible Community Use
- Training and Professional Development
- On-Site Retail that will feature therapeutic and educational toys and resources

The building has been meticulously planned to deliver a world-class child development facility while fostering meaningful community engagement. By supporting this capital project, Ireland will be investing in a transformative space that will deliver essential paediatric therapy services, training opportunities, and inclusive community resources.

WHO?

Sensational Kids is a national charity, social enterprise and non-profit dedicated to transforming the lives of children with additional needs. Founded in 2007 with a vision to make therapy services accessible to all children, Sensational Kids provides life-changing, timely evidence-based therapies and assessments for children and adolescents who may otherwise face long waiting lists for essential services publicly.



As a non-profit organisation, every service we offer, all donations and every product we sell in our child development store directly supports our mission of making high-quality, accessible therapy a reality for all children so that no child is left behind. Sensational Kids has grown into an organisation of deep, meaningful impact.

We operate four regional development centres – Kildare, Mayo, Monaghan and Cork with almost 40 staff who have changed the lives of some 10,000 children, while saving families some €4 million in therapy fees.

COST

The total project cost of the state-of-the-art **National Child Development Centre** is estimated to be €16m.

The funds to construct the centre will come from generous philanthropic donations which amounts to €11m whilst a capital application has been submitted to the HSE requesting capital assistance of €5m to complete the build.

We are asking the Irish state to contribute €5m or 31.25% of the cost to complete the **National Child Development Centre** in Kildare Town which will begin the process to ensure that no child is left without timely access to an appropriate service to meet their needs and which will have a transformative impact on the future of children with additional needs.