



Minister to hear case for child hospice care in Donegal

Parents to meet with Health Minister

BY CATHERINE COOK

NEXT month, parents of children with rare and terminal illness in Donegal will meet with Health Minister Leo Varadkar in an attempt to highlight the lack of services available in the county.

The group of six parents include Gina Grant from Letterkenny, Secretary of the Donegal Down Syndrome Association and mother of six children, two of whom have special needs.

Speaking to the Donegal News, Ms Grant said that the group was grateful for the opportunity to make progress in their campaign to improve access to services.

"We want to highlight the lack of paediatric care and hospice care in Donegal and to let the Minister know how difficult it is to access treatment and services for parents and children from Donegal. Everything is in Dublin."

Ms Grant continued: "We are not going with any delusions that we can change the healthcare system or policies overnight but we want to let him know the reality of the situation for us, and how there are small things that can be done in the short-term that would make massive differences in our lives."

Ms Grant said that one of the measures which would make an enormous difference would be to make cross-border services more accessible.

"There are a number of things like tests that could be carried out in Derry that would prevent us from having to make the long journey to Dublin and would make our lives a lot easier. Having to travel with a severely ill child is a very difficult thing to have to do."

"No one can understand what it is like to have a child with a rare or terminal illness unless you live through it. It is hard for people, regardless of their ministerial position to know what it is like to live in Donegal and not have access to these services."

"We also need to stress to the Minister that we definitely need hospice

care and respite care in Donegal to allow our children to die with the respect and dignity they deserve. Currently the only children's hospice for the whole of Ireland is Laura Lynne House in Dublin."

Ms Grant said she is grateful to Minister Joe McHugh for his help in organising the meeting.

"I had spoken with Minister McHugh in November and asked him if there was any way he could facilitate the meeting with Minister Varadkar. We were delighted to get confirmation this week that the meeting will take place in early February."

She concluded: "It is nice to know that we are making progress and taking a step forward with our campaign. We are hoping that the meeting will be productive and we welcome the opportunity to speak with someone who has the opportunity to change policy."