



Together we can achieve a society where no person's life is limited by epilepsy

(Via Email)

7th January 2026

Hildegarde Naughton TD,
Minister for Education and Youth,
Department of Education,
Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1,
D01 RC96

RE: Epilepsy Ireland campaign for Seizure Safe Schools

Dear Minister,

I trust this finds you well and may we take this opportunity to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Minister for Education and Youth. I am writing to you on behalf of Epilepsy Ireland regarding one of our key advocacy priorities which we hope to work closely with you on in your new position.

By way of background, Epilepsy Ireland is the national organisation representing people with epilepsy and their families and it is estimated that there are over 45,000 people living with epilepsy in Ireland today. Our vision is to achieve a society where no person's life is limited by epilepsy. Our key areas of work include providing information and support services to people with epilepsy and their families; training and education programmes about epilepsy for the wider community; raising awareness and understanding of epilepsy; seeking positive policy changes which can benefit people with epilepsy and their families; and finally, investing in Irish epilepsy research.

We are specifically writing to you on the behalf of the estimated 10,000 children with epilepsy who are of school going age in Ireland in relation to our ongoing campaign to make Ireland's schools "Seizure Safe".

Epilepsy Ireland's existing support and training services currently includes several initiatives aimed at helping educate our educators about epilepsy:

- Information Sessions on Epilepsy Awareness for Teachers and SNAs

These events allow educational professionals to learn more about epilepsy such as recognising the different types of seizures and the correct response to a seizure - as well as learning more about some of the unseen implications of the condition that children may be experiencing, such as potential side effects from their Anti-Seizure medications. Building this understanding and awareness of epilepsy amongst educational professionals can be hugely beneficial to a child with epilepsy as they progress through their educational journey.



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- **Epilepsy Awareness and the Administration of Buccal Midazolam Training**

This is a more in-depth formal training programme which also includes training on how to correctly administer an emergency medication called Buccal Midazolam. Successful completion of the training comes with two-year certification. Buccal Midazolam is a rescue medication which is administered during a seizure under medical advice and if given promptly, helps to reduce seizure duration. This relatively simple procedure can prevent major disruption to daily life resulting from hospital emergency treatment that can result from a prolonged seizure. We train circa 3,000 professionals every year in this potentially lifesaving training, many of whom are teachers and SNAs.

- **Education Information Pack – an Epilepsy Resource for Pre-Schools, Schools and Colleges**

First published in 2020, this resource aims to inform staff across education settings about the needs of students with epilepsy of all age ranges. It covers topics such as what epilepsy is and how it can be managed in education settings; how to support students with epilepsy; the roles of education partners, families and students in developing care plans and policies; the educational impact of epilepsy and supports available to schools and colleges to assist with the training of staff.

- **Other resources**

We also have a range of other resources and supports – including our seizure first aid posters, Epilepsy and School Booklet, and direct supports which we can offer to children with epilepsy via our Young Epilepsy Programme.

In addition, our team of 12 Community Resource Officers, who are based across Ireland, regularly support schools with queries and concerns they may have about epilepsy and can offer schools talks about epilepsy to the entire school community - something we are proud to do in supporting an inclusive classroom environment for students with epilepsy.

Towards 'Seizure Safe Schools'

Before Christmas, thanks to funding support from UCB Pharma, we wrote to every school in the country providing them with a hard copy of our Education Information Pack (referenced above); an outline of our key services so that schools know we are here to provide help and support; and hard copies of our seizure first aid posters to display in the school environment.

However, Minister, there is a crucial point that we must raise with you which we believe requires your attention. Unfortunately, despite the range of supports we offer, there is ultimately a ceiling to what we can provide with the resources that are currently available to us.

Our experience is that our interactions with schools are often reactive – resulting from a new diagnosis of epilepsy or due an incoming student with an existing diagnosis. Every year in September, our team are inundated with urgent calls from schools for information and support around epilepsy.



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This needs to change. As noted, there are an estimated 10,000 children living with epilepsy in Ireland today and it is reasonable to assume that every teacher and SNA at some point in their careers will be supporting a child with epilepsy. Therefore, we need to see policy changes to ensure that teachers are appropriately educated about epilepsy as part of their initial teacher training – and to have systems in place to have their training refreshed regularly over the course of their careers.

Knowing how to respond to a seizure is a potentially lifesaving intervention and given the prevalence of epilepsy, any teacher could suddenly and unexpectedly be in a situation where they need to respond to a seizure.

It is also vital that teachers and support staff are equipped to recognise seizures. Given the time a student spends in a classroom, they may be more exposed to their teacher than any other person in their life. We regularly hear of instances where a child has been presumed to be daydreaming or not paying attention in class – only for it to be later discovered that they were experiencing non-convulsive seizures (e.g. focal or absence seizures) – which can be just as challenging for the person as convulsive seizures.

These are just two examples of why educating teachers about epilepsy should not result from a recent diagnosis within a school community – knowledge should be imparted to teachers from the moment they prepare to enter the classroom, and we believe that Department policy should reflect this.

Although it inevitably comes with challenges for the child and the school community, we firmly believe that a diagnosis of epilepsy should not negatively hinder a child's learning experience. Ensuring the wider education sector has the correct information, support and resources they need to support that child is crucial. We do not expect our teachers and education providers to become experts, but a more proactive system does need to be put in place to ensure the best supports possible for students with epilepsy across Ireland. Crucially, through the ongoing development of our services over many years, there is already a framework in place that with some development, means this would not be an overly cumbersome exercise.

We would also note that there are international obligations in ensuring systems like this are in place. In 2022, Ireland agreed to the implementation of the World Health Organisation's Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and other Neurological Conditions. Throughout this plan, the need to support students with epilepsy through an inclusive education system is referenced as a powerful tool in reducing stigma and increasing understanding. We have already seen progress on this in other jurisdictions, having recently met colleagues from Czechia who have begun implementing a more proactive approach to managing epilepsy in their country's classrooms.

In recent years, we have worked with your Department to progress the implementation of Deferred Leaving Cert exams for students with epilepsy and other medical conditions –



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something we were very proud to see implemented. This was a logical proposal, which ultimately improved the lives of students living with medical conditions like epilepsy.

We believe that our proposals for "Seizure Safe Schools" will be similarly impactful for students with epilepsy and education professionals alike. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you and your Department once more to make this a reality and are requesting a meeting with you to discuss this further on how we can make our proposals a reality.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

In the meantime, may we take this opportunity to wish you and yours every best wish for 2026.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Peter" on the top line and "Murphy" on the bottom line.

Peter Murphy,
CEO,
Epilepsy Ireland,