

CONTINUITY IN EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME

July Provision

- Down Syndrome Ireland has been contacted by a growing number of parents in relation to the issue of July Provision for their children. As an organisation representing children and their parents, Down Syndrome Ireland is taking the concerns raised very seriously.
- July Provision provides funding for an extended school year for children with a severe or profound general learning disability or children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Where school-based provision is not feasible, homebased provision may be granted.
- All children with Down Syndrome will have some degree of learning disability, mostly in the mild to moderate range, which will affect their rate of development and learning. Their rate of development does not proceed apace with their chronological age. They develop more slowly than their peers but are capable of making progress in all areas of development. Children with Down syndrome are not simply developmentally delayed but have a specific learning profile.
- In the vast majority of cases, mainstream schools are the first choice for parents of children with Down Syndrome. Irish schools are very inclusive and can access supports to address the needs of students with Down Syndrome.
- The issue arises in relation to the length of the summer holidays, when children with Down Syndrome, in keeping with their learning profile, will regress educationally, unless they have some level of support in place for at least a portion of the summer break.
- By limiting July provision to children with a severe / profound GLD or with ASD, children with Down Syndrome are actively discriminated against. As a result, parents are often forced to consider a special education setting to ensure that their children can avail of July provision. This is despite the fact that the EPSEN Act (2004) asserts that children with special educational needs should be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs.
- July provision, either school or home based, must be an option for all children with Down Syndrome, regardless of their level of GLD. This will ensure their continued successful inclusion and educational development in a mainstream setting.