



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

Office of the Head of Operations,
Disability Services/Social Care Division,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369
Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

8th April 2021

Deputy David Cullinane,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House, Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: david.cullinane@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary question, which was submitted to this department for response.

PQ 14943/21

To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients seen by multidisciplinary teams over the past three months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. (The PQ is referred to Early Intervention and School Age Teams)

HSE Response

The HSE and disability service providers recognise the critical need and importance of disability supports for children and is very much aware of the importance of service provision, including therapy provision by therapists and multidisciplinary teams. The impact of COVID-19 on people's lives has and continues to be very significant. Our collective aim is to restore services and ensure continuity of services in a safe way and in line with the very significant investment made by the State and funded agencies.

With regard to the request for information regarding the number of patients seen by multidisciplinary teams over the past three months, this information is not collated nationally.

Waiting lists are collated nationally by Primary Care for individual therapy services such as Speech and Language, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, however the numbers of children waiting for therapeutic intervention and also seen by Multidisciplinary teams are not combined into one National Early Intervention and School Age lists.

Additionally, because of unidisciplinary data collection, it is also possible that children are counted on more than one caseload for example Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy.

Children's Therapeutic Services

The HSE acknowledges the challenges in meeting the demand for children's therapeutic services and is acutely conscious of how this impacts on children and their families. The HSE is also fully cognisant of the stress that waiting times for early intervention services can cause to families.

A number of service improvements are being introduced that, when implemented, will help improve access to services for children with disabilities and developmental delays. The overall programme of improvement is the ongoing roll out of Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS). The HSE is establishing a total of 91 Children's Disability Networks across the nine CHOs, each comprised of one specialist inter-disciplinary Children's Disability Network Team (CDNTs) to work with children aged from birth to 18 years

with complex disability needs. This requires the reorganisation of all current HSE and HSE funded children's disability services into geographically-based CDNTs.

PDS is doing this by forming partnerships between all the disability organisations in an area and pooling their staff with expertise in the different types of disabilities to form the CDNTs. These teams will provide for all children with significant disability, regardless of their diagnosis, where they live or where they go to school. This reconfiguration of services under PDS is in line with Health Service Reform and the implementation of Community Healthcare Networks under Sláintecare.

Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme (PDS) is a significant change programme for the provision of services and supports for children from birth to 18 years of age, in line with Sláintecare and the Programme for Government, in order to:

- Provide a clear pathway and fairer access to services for all children with a disability.
- Make the best use of available resources for the benefit of all children and their families
- Ensure effective teams are working in partnership with families and with education staff to support children with a disability to reach their full potential.

PDS aligns with two clear objectives of The Sláintecare Report to:

- Provide the majority of care at or as close to home as possible
- Create an integrated system of care with healthcare professionals working closely together.

Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) are being established to provide services and supports for all children with complex needs within a defined geographic area. CDNTs are teams of health and social care professionals, including occupational therapy, psychology, nursing, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social work and others. The team will work closely together in a family centred model, focussing on the child's and family's own priorities. Once all teams are in place, every child with complex needs will have access to a team, regardless of the nature of their disability, where they live, or the school they attend.

Children and their families will have access to the full range of services and supports of the CDNT according to their individual needs. This includes universal, targeted and specialist supports, such as individual therapeutic intervention and access to specialist consultation and assessment when needed. Supports will be provided as is feasible in the child's natural environments - their home, school and community.

Developments in 2021

The HSE welcomes the recent announcements from the Government of additional funding for Disability Services:

- An additional €100 million secured for Disability Services in the recent budget. In the National Service Plan for 2021, the HSE commits to:
 - Providing 100 additional multi-disciplinary posts within children's network teams to improve assessment of need and treatment with a particular focus on behavioural, dietetics and paediatric services within the children's disability network teams and move towards the completion of reconfiguration under progressing disability services.
 - The NSP also commits to the development of additional Respite Services and in-home intensive transitional support packages.
- €20 million in one-off grants will be provided to reform disability services, build the capacity of disability organisations and to improve the quality of life of those who rely on these services.
- €7.8 million has been allocated by Sláintecare to facilitate the HSE and its funded service providers to address the overdue Assessments of Need for children and young adults with disabilities

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Cathal Morgan,
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations