



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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Deputy Pauline Tully,  
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Dear Deputy Tully,

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

**PQ: 16081/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of children who are currently on the waiting list for children's disability services; the number of those on the waiting list for less than 3, 3-6, 6-12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**PQ: 16082/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of children in each CHO on the waiting list for children's disability services in 2018, 2019, 2020 and to date in 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

The HSE is aware of the numbers of children waiting for therapy services and is fully cognisant of the stress this can cause to families. The HSE also acknowledges the challenges in meeting the demand for children's disability services and is acutely conscious of how this impacts on children and their families

The HSE and disability service providers recognise the critical need and importance of disability supports for children with additional and special needs and is very much aware of the importance of service provision, such as Respite, Therapeutic Supports and Home Support, for the families of children with disabilities. 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 number of children who are currently on the waiting list for children's disability services in 2018, 2019, 2020 and to date in 2021, 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 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.

With regard to respite provision, there is no centrally maintained waiting list for respite services, however the local HSE areas are aware of the need and requirements in their areas and work with the local Service Providers with a view to responding to the level of presenting needs within the resources available.

### **Children's Therapeutic Services**

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**