

23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2021

Mr Thomas Gould, TD.  
Dáil Éireann,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ ref 54508/21**

**“To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that disability services in County Cork are offering parents speech and language therapy courses instead of direct intervention with children and not as a complementary service”.**

Dear Deputy Gould

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare reconfigured children’s disability services to Childrens Disability Network Teams under the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme (PDS) in April 2021. 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 (CDNTs) have been 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 nursing, occupational therapy, psychology, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social work and others. The team work closely together in a family centred model, focusing on the child’s and family’s own priorities. Every child with complex needs arising from a disability will have access to a team, regardless of the nature of their disability, where they live, or the school they attend.

The CDNT work collaboratively with the child and family to identify the needs and priorities of the child and family, plan goals and develop an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). This is a written plan that focuses on the strengths and needs of the child and family, incorporating their priorities and concerns.

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 direct supports, such as individual therapeutic intervention and access to consultation and assessment when needed. Supports will be provided as is feasible in the child's natural environments - their home, school and community. Targeted interventions may include communication programmes for families run by Speech & Language Therapists, these are evidenced based clinical programmes including parent workshops and one to one direct parent and children video feedback sessions. This is in line with the nationally agreed pathways of Intervention for children & young People attending the CDNT.

Direct supports inclusive of communication parent programmes are, where appropriate, based on assessed needs, however due to finite resources, large caseloads and current recruitment challenges; the teams manage a prioritised waiting list system for access to interventions. The HSE and the Lead Agencies managing the CDNTs remain committed to ensure a safe, quality and timely service to children with disability and their families.

I trust this clarifies the situation for you.

Yours sincerely



**Ms. Majella Daly,**  
**Head of Disability Services,**  
**Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**

