

26th November, 2021

Mr David Stanton, TD.
Dáil Eireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 57251/21

“To ask the Minister for Health the situation with respect to the operation of the Progressive Disability Services Programme in the Cork region; if he is satisfied that children attending special schools in the region are receiving adequate supports and services under the programme especially in relation to the Central Cork Disability Network Team; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

Dear Deputy Stanton,

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. In CKCH there are over 270 whole time equivalent HSCP and administrative staff assigned to the 14 Childrens Disability Network Teams. These posts were reconfigured from previous children's disability posts from across the HSE and Section 38 and 39 voluntary agencies.

It is the objective of the CDNTs to ensure that all children have timely access to the appropriate services, however the CDNTs have experienced significant challenges in the months since reconfiguration. Challenges include higher than predicted caseloads on each CDNTas well as finite and limited publicly funded resources assigned to each network. Please see attached bulletin explaining challenges CDNT's are experiencing since reconfiguration. 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.

With specific reference CDNT 8 - Central Cork, the CDNT supports children with complex needs in the following special schools; St. Paul's, St. Kilian's, Scoil Eanna and Scoil Bernadette. The CDNT work closely with teachers, school staff, Special Needs Assistants and Principals regarding the individual children and the family's needs. Children have access to a range of interdisciplinary supports detailed in the table below; at the end of Q3 2021 there are a total of 487 children on the CDNT caseload.

Physiotherapy	2.00
Occupational Therapy	3.00
Speech & Language Therapy	4.80
Psychology	2.40
Social Worker	1.00
Nursing	0.5
Family Support	0.80
Administration	1.00
TOTAL WTE	15.50

As part of the HSE National Service Plan 2021, a total of 100 development posts were allocated for PDS and its implementation. Under Phase 1 and Phase 2 CKCH received 7.5 wte posts with an additionality of 5.8 posts under Minister Rabbittes' Special School allocation. This totals an uplift of 13.3 posts over 2021.

HSE National Disability Office is undertaking a national CDNT workforce planning process commencing with a CDNT staff census on 13th October. This will allow for a meaningful allocation of posts going forward and to allow for more accurate projections to support evidence based allocation process for new development posts as part of the HSE National Service Plan 2022 estimates process.

I trust this clarifies the situation for you.

Yours sincerely



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

