

29th October, 2021

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

PQ ref 48659/21

“To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the significant delays in accessing treatment due to the reconfiguration of children's disabilities teams in Cork.”

Dear Deputy Gould,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly 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 CDNT, restraints due to Covid and the HSE cyber-attack as well as finite and limited publicly funded resources assigned to each network. 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.

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 Rabittes 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 in October 2021. 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



**Mr Michael Hegarty,
A/Head of Disability Services,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**

