

23rd September 2021

Deputy Seán Sherlock,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 42397/21

“To ask the Minister for Health the number of children under the age of 18 years awaiting a first-time appointment since being switched to the new children's disability network team for Central Cork by age, intervention type, SLT, occupational therapy and physiotherapy in tabular form.”

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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.

As one of the key principles of PDS is interdisciplinary working with the family as distinct from uni-disciplinary intervention and assessments; data regarding uni-disciplinary interventions is not gathered. The following data is gathered:

In the **Central Cork** network **437** children transferred to the new CDNT from previous disability service. Of the **437** children who transferred **336** have been seen for an initial contact with the team since April 2021, this initial contact is dependent on the child's needs and may have consisted but is not limited to initial assessment, initial intervention and development of the IFSP.

It is the objective of the CDNTs to ensure that all children transferred and newly referred will 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.

I trust this clarifies the situation for you.

Yours sincerely



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

