



15<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Mr. Mattie McGrath TD  
Dail Eireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ 61632/22**

**To ask the Minister for Health the reason that there has been no additional capacity added to disability residential services for children in south Tipperary for a period of five years; the urgent steps that he is taking to increase respite services for children in south Tipperary; the current vacancy rates for therapists within the CDNT teams in south Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy McGrath,

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

*I have reviewed the matter and the following is the current position.*

There have been a small number of children placed in Disability Residential Services funded by HSE South Tipperary Disability Services in the last five years. These service providers are selected based on their ability to appropriately meet the needs of the child, who for whatever reason can no longer live at home. Such residential placements are not always based in the South Tipperary area.

Placing a child in full time residential care would only be considered after all other options to support the child to live at home are no longer effective. These include respite, which may occur in a variety of settings for any length of time. It is not always centre-based and may be provided in a number of ways, including day respite such as Saturday Clubs, School Holiday Camps and overnight respite. In-House home supports and shared care services are also options.

The two overnight respite service providers in South Tipperary are the Brothers of Charity a Section 38 service provider and Northfields RK Respite, which is a private provider. Both services have received additional funding in 2022 to increase capacity in service provision of overnight respite.

During 2022, the Brothers of Charity supported additional openings for one child and two adults with the extra funding provided, however, full capacity has not been reached as it is understood that the Brothers of Charity currently have five vacant posts between children and adult respite services. These positions are being processed through HR or being advertised, it must be noted that the Health Care Assistant posts have been advertised on a number of occasions.



### **Recruitment Initiatives**

The Brothers of Charity hosted an open night recently and four relief staff are currently being processed by their HR department. With the successful commencement of these posts the Brothers of Charity should be in a position to open one extra night per fortnight for both children and adult respite services. The Brothers of Charity also report that they have secured a staff nurse who is currently covering an existing sick leave hence there is no overall increase in numbers. It is hoped that the staff member will return in early 2023.

With the additional 2022 funding, Northfields RK Respite were able to provide one extra night per week respite to two children. RK Respite currently have the full staffing complement to offer the following service and will not be in a position to expand on same.

- 38 Weekend Openings
- 38 Saturday Day Time Places
- 40 Day Support Openings delivered over school holidays ( 2 February Mid-Term, 6 Easter Holiday, 27 Summer Holiday, 2 Halloween, 3 Christmas Holidays)
- 2 night opening for the 9 weeks of Summer Holidays
- 34 One Night Mid-Week Individualised Openings during school term
- 6 One Day One Night Individualised Openings during school holidays
- 17 Mid-Week Term Time Openings
- 17 Mid-Week Term Time Openings (Higher Support)

Both service providers have responded with flexibility, where possible, to support emergency respite requests throughout the year.

### **Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT)**

There are 4 vacancies within the Cashel CDNT and 5.2 WTE vacancies within the Clonmel CDNT. As with other areas Disability Services within SECH are experiencing significant recruitment challenges. SECH continues to express posts out to current national panels and continues to prioritise local recruitment campaigns. A Senior Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) campaign was at interview stage in September 2022 and a Staff Grade SLT national campaign is underway. A Senior Occupational Therapist (OT) local panel has been formed and a national panel is in place with a national supplementary campaign underway. Senior Psychology and Staff Grade Psychology national panels are also now in place.

The HSE have also commenced an international recruitment campaign for therapy staff and it is hoped that we will be in a position to fill more vacancies from this process. The interviews are scheduled to take place in the next two weeks.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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**Ms. Karen Fitzgerald**  
**A/Head of Service, Disability Service**



**South East Community Healthcare**