

18th February, 2021

Ms. Holly Cairns, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 7899/22

"To ask the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to address waiting lists for assessments and therapies for the children's disability network teams in south-west areas of County Cork."

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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.

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.

The model of CDNT intervention is based on a tiered model of intervention, all families, children and young people are offered and strongly encouraged to access preventative universal approaches which build skills and support families understand their child, the child's development and how to positively support their child's development. They are proactive approaches focusing on prevention and forming the basis for further intervention. In their absence other interventions may be less effective.

Universal Interventions

Information sessions/ talks/programmes for families on particular topics related to the needs of the children within the CDNT.

Targeted Interventions

These are individual and group interventions for children who have identified similar needs e.g. PECS Training, Lámh Training, Hanen, Incredible Years.

Intense Interventions

These are individual interventions to enable a child and family to receive one to one intervention to address a significant identified need that cannot be met by a Universal or Targeted Intervention.

It is the objective of the CDNTs to ensure that all children will have timely access to the appropriate services; however the CDNTs have experienced significant challenges. Challenges include higher than predicted caseloads on each CDNT which is based on 3.5% of the population presenting with complex needs within a network population of 50,000 as well as finite and limited publicly funded resources assigned to each network.

Challenges also include the ongoing impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, lack of suitable accommodation for the teams as well as very limited administrative support. Furthermore there is no integrated information management system for the team's leading to inefficient operational management systems. The teams are currently responding to high numbers of complaints and feedback due to lack of resources from key stakeholders including service users, the education sector other health services.

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.

There are a number of vacancies due to difficulty with recruitment and statutory leave. There are particular deficits in Psychology, Social Work, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy. There is also no Dietetic services for the teams to access. Backfilling of posts is challenging in the current environment due to lack of availability of appropriately qualified staff and demand for same across the health service. However the Lead Agencies responsible for the management of the teams are prioritising the recruitment of such posts. The teams operate according to a suite of national and regional standard operating policies, procedures and guidelines. There are prioritisation systems and caseload management systems including assessment and intervention pathways in place.

The demand for assessment and intervention outweighs the resource capacity of the teams, this means that in practice children with the highest priority of need can access services and other children with a lower priority of need are placed on the appropriate waitlists. The caseload management systems are reviewed and updated regularly by the team managers. CKCH Disability Services have put in place additional waitlist initiatives with external agencies to support caseload management, using time related savings, including preliminary team assessments under the AON process and ASD assessments.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely



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

