



**Ceannasaí Seirbhíse do
Dhaoine Faoi Mhíchumas**

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21st February 2022

Mr Paul McAuliffe, TD
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Email: paul.mcauliffe@oireachtas.ie

PQ ref 7929/22

To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on his efforts to reduce the waiting list for early intervention in speech and language therapy in north western areas of Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy McAuliffe,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you with information in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The HSE, in partnership with voluntary service providers has reconfigured Children's Disability Service under the programme: Progressing Disability Services.

The Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) were established in CHO DNCC on 20th September 2021. It is a very significant change programme with a new model of service which focuses on outcomes for children and families rather than inputs. An inter-disciplinary team will work with each family to develop an Individual Family Service Plan and support children and parents to reach goals identified on the plan. The focus is on the goals that children and families may meaningfully aim to achieve at home and steps they may take together with the Children's Disability Network Team rather than the number of sessions of therapies like speech and language or occupational therapy received. As consequence of the above development the Disability Services will not hold specific waiting lists for individual therapies including speech and language therapy.

All disability services within CHO DNCC are experiencing significant recruitment challenges to Children's Disability Network Teams. Since reconfiguration in September 2021, there are on average 75 vacancies across the 12 teams. We are continuing to work towards improved access to services with a focus on rolling out universal and targeted care pathways for children and families on waiting lists including developing webinars, group-based workshops and information sessions for children and families and development of a repository of online resources for children and their families to promote and enable wellbeing at home. We have established a Recruitment and Retention working group, chaired by our Head of Human Resources with the Lead Agencies responsible for the delivery of Children's Disability Network Services (Avista, St. Michael's House, and Central Remedial Clinical) to support the CEOs of the responsible Lead Agencies to explore Recruitment initiatives, including international recruitment.

Concurrently the Head of Service Disability chairs a CHO DNCC Governance Group overseeing CDNTs, and this group is exploring if there are any alternative staff grades or qualifications which could assist staff in CDNTs whilst they navigate the significant change within service delivery. The level of staff vacancies is not easily resolved as there are essentially more posts for Allied Health Professionals than qualified staff available nationally. We have also increased the number of administrative support to these teams to ensure that our qualified therapists are doing work appropriate to their qualifications rather than administrative tasks. The teams are experiencing high levels of maternity leave as the team demographic largely consists of young



female Health and Social Care Professionals in this area. In this regard and in an effort to mitigate the risk, I have agreed with the CEOs of the Lead Agencies to approve the backfill of maternity leave which is not resourced within the allocated budget and Inter Agency Agreement for delivery of children's services in CDNTs.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jillian Connolly', written over a horizontal line.

Ms Jillian Connolly
Acting Head of Service for Disability