



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

**Office of the Head of Operations,**  
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28<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Deputy Rose Conway Walsh,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [rose.conwaywalsh@oireachtas.ie](mailto:rose.conwaywalsh@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Conway Walsh,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary question, which was submitted to this department for response.

**PQ 63462/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health the current waiting times for children with autism trying to access speech and language therapy in each county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

Children requiring interventions including health and therapy services, such as Speech and Language Therapy would access services through Primary Care Teams in CHO Areas as well as through Children's Disability Services.

Children's disability services are provided based on the presenting needs of the child rather than by their diagnosis or the actual type of disability or service required. Services are provided following individual assessment according to the child's individual requirements and support needs.

Whilst accepting that significant levels of vital therapies were temporarily curtailed due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, the restoration and continuity of services is underway in a safe way in line with the very significant investment made by the State and funded agencies. We continue to work with service users and their families/carers to ensure that we achieve this aim.

HSE Disability Services does not gather data on services provided through other service areas such as Primary Care, however, Primary Care Operations has compiled the latest available waiting list data, on services for which they collate data, for the end of November 2021 for those aged 0 to 17 years and 11 months.

- Table 1 in the Appendix includes the data Speech and Language Therapy - Number of 0-17 years & 11 months old patients awaiting Initial Assessment - October 2021.
- Table 2 in the Appendix includes the data for Speech and Language Therapy - Number of 0-17 years & 11 months old patients awaiting Initial Therapy - October 2021.
- Table 3 in the Appendix includes the data for Speech and Language Therapy - Number of 0-17 years & 11 months old patients awaiting Further Therapy - October 2021



The implementation of the Progressing Disability Services for Children & Young People (PDS) programme is agreed Government and HSE policy. This policy supports the reconfiguration of children's disability services to provide equitable, child and family centred services based on need rather than diagnosis. This aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

The Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS) model addresses the previous inequity in service provision whereby there may have been an excellent service for some children and little or no service for others. This variance may have been linked to diagnosis, age group or geography. Under the PDS programme children's disability services are changing from diagnosis based to needs based, so that all children with a disability or developmental delay have access to the right service based on their needs no matter where they live.

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.

The National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay ensures that children are directed to the appropriate service based on the complexity of their presenting needs rather than based on diagnosis. Many children with a disability who have support needs can be effectively supported within mainstream health services. This policy provides a single point of entry, signposting parents and referrers to the most appropriate service (Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children's Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties).

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

In line with the PDS model, resources assigned to children's disability services are allocated to the 0 – 18 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) rather than to a dedicated early intervention team or dedicated school age team.

91 Children's Disability Networks (CDN) are aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country and each Children's Disability Network has one CDNT providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age. Early Intervention Teams and School Age Teams previously in place have reconfigured into 0-18 CDNTs. Every child across the country with complex needs arising from their disability now has access to a Children's Disability Network Team.

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 works closely together in a family centred model, focusing on the child's and family's own priorities. Every child with complex needs has access to a team, regardless of the nature of their disability, where they live, or the school they attend.

Children and their families have access to the full range of services and supports of the CDNT according to their individual needs. This includes universal, targeted and specialist supports, such as individual therapeutic intervention and access to specialist consultation and assessment when needed. Supports will be provided as is feasible in the child's natural environments - their home, school and community.

The first step for all areas has been the reconfiguration of existing staff resources into CDNTs. The staffing mix available in each area is influenced by the historical development of services. For example, some areas may have had a significant number of nurses available for reconfiguration, others may have family support workers or early educators.



Since 2019, 285 development posts have been allocated to children's disability services across the country. This includes 100 posts allocated under the HSE National Service Plan 2021. 185 development posts were allocated to children's disability services across the country in 2021. These posts have been assigned based on a number of factors, including the existing ratio of staff to the number of children with disabilities in each area. The distribution of 2022 development posts is currently being finalised.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard O'Regan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear 'O' and 'R'.

**Bernard O'Regan**  
**Head of Operations - Disability Services,**  
**Community Operations**

## Appendix

<b>Table 1</b>							
<b>Speech and Language Therapy - Number of 0-17 years &amp; 11 months old patients awaiting Initial Assessment - November 2021</b>							
LHO	0 to 4 Mths	4 months & 1 day - 8 months	8 months & 1 day - 12 months	12 months & 1 day - 18 months	18 months & 1 day to 24 months	>24 months	Total
Cavan Monaghan	248	274	203	178	47	30	980
Donegal	426	168	45	3	22	93	757
Sligo Leitrim	25	0	0	0	0	0	25
<b>CHO1</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1,762</b>
Galway	508	435	175	43	23	2	1,186
Mayo	53	5	0	0	0	0	58
Roscommon	63	13	4	0	0	0	80
<b>CHO2</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1,324</b>
Clare	174	125	16	27	2	5	349
Limerick	346	250	204	65	8	53	926
North Tipperary East Limerick	225	194	82	31	15	0	547
<b>CHO3</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>1,822</b>
Kerry	161	14	0	0	0	0	175
North Cork	175	137	13	0	0	0	325
North Lee	333	201	19	0	0	0	553
South Lee	327	26	3	0	9	15	380
West Cork	51	2	0	0	0	0	53
<b>CHO4</b>	<b>1,047</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1,486</b>
Carlow Kilkenny	207	128	6	2	0	0	343
South Tipperary	217	64	2	0	0	0	283
Waterford	66	58	63	78	152	4	421
Wexford	246	221	173	184	149	17	990
<b>CHO5</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2,037</b>
Dublin South East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dun Laoghaire	126	18	0	0	0	0	144
Wicklow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>CHO6</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>144</b>
Dublin South City	163	135	74	111	36	2	521
Dublin South West	159	153	213	81	0	0	606
Dublin West	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kildare West Wicklow	330	368	190	88	0	0	976
<b>CHO7</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2,103</b>
Laois Offaly	168	0	0	0	0	0	168
Longford Westmeath	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Louth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Meath	36	0	0	0	0	0	36
<b>CHO8</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>204</b>
Dublin North	318	274	40	2	0	1	635
Dublin North Central	113	79	54	23	14	0	283
Dublin North West	110	133	79	57	58	3	440
<b>CHO9</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1,358</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,374</b>	<b>3,475</b>	<b>1,658</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>12,240</b>

Table 2

Speech and Language Therapy - Total Number of patients awaiting Initial Therapy - November 2021							
LHO	0 to 4 Mths	4 months & 1 day - 8 months	8 months & 1 day - 12 months	12 months & 1 day - 18 months	18 months & 1 day to 24 months	>24 months	Total
Cavan Monaghan	43	14	15	2	0	0	74
Donegal	47	5	0	0	0	0	52
Sligo Leitrim	58	7	2	0	0	0	67
<b>CHO1</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>193</b>
Galway	237	90	37	23	9	0	396
Mayo	158	113	49	1	0	0	321
Roscommon	200	130	32	25	10	0	397
<b>CHO2</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,114</b>
Clare	96	94	26	15	3	1	235
Limerick	122	44	45	15	18	42	286
North Tipperary East Limerick	88	39	13	2	0	0	142
<b>CHO3</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>663</b>
Kerry	97	62	17	9	0	0	185
North Cork	41	65	53	98	89	0	346
North Lee	183	207	136	261	111	57	955
South Lee	334	175	103	128	101	99	940
West Cork	51	28	10	2	0	0	91
<b>CHO4</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>2,517</b>
Carlow Kilkenny	83	93	63	49	47	196	531
South Tipperary	100	81	38	15	0	0	234
Waterford	49	42	44	25	22	173	355
Wexford	61	87	50	92	38	93	421
<b>CHO5</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>1,541</b>
Dublin South East	9	1	0	0	0	0	10
Dun Laoghaire	46	70	9	0	0	0	125
Wicklow	44	36	5	1	0	0	86
<b>CHO6</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>221</b>
Dublin South City	30	18	14	12	15	5	94
Dublin South West	59	58	35	47	80	129	408
Dublin West	3	2	6	2	27	18	58
Kildare West Wicklow	95	10	5	5	0	0	115
<b>CHO7</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>675</b>
Laois Offaly	144	95	1	0	8	1	249
Longford Westmeath	56	11	0	0	0	0	67
Louth	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Meath	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
<b>CHO8</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>323</b>
Dublin North	237	351	214	215	15	0	1,032
Dublin North Central	100	110	37	46	23	16	332
Dublin North West	196	158	128	61	54	21	618
<b>CHO9</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1,982</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,074</b>	<b>2,296</b>	<b>1,187</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>9,229</b>

Table 3

Speech and Language Therapy - Number of 0-17 years & 11 months old patients awaiting Further Therapy - November 2021							
LHO	0 to 4 Mths	4 months & 1 day - 8 months	8 months & 1 day - 12 months	12 months & 1 day - 18 months	18 months & 1 day to 24 months	>24 months	Total
Cavan Monaghan	16	33	22	25	29	0	125
Donegal	110	49	30	45	19	0	253
Sligo Leitrim	37	10	0	0	0	0	47
<b>CHO1</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>425</b>
Galway	313	305	115	137	135	36	1,041
Mayo	273	164	47	7	0	0	491
Roscommon	70	54	0	28	0	0	152
<b>CHO2</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1,684</b>
Clare	231	146	134	17	37	15	580
Limerick	238	143	118	73	51	84	707
North Tipperary East Limerick	141	72	40	2	0	0	255
<b>CHO3</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>1,542</b>
Kerry	308	182	148	137	0	0	775
North Cork	169	30	49	61	33	0	342
North Lee	198	207	185	166	115	79	950
South Lee	311	163	112	64	38	42	730
West Cork	155	34	16	9	0	0	214
<b>CHO4</b>	<b>1,141</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>3,011</b>
Carlow Kilkenny	41	21	45	28	54	1	190
South Tipperary	0	194	292	0	0	0	486
Waterford	41	5	4	3	3	7	63
Wexford	84	88	73	58	114	75	492
<b>CHO5</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>1,231</b>
Dublin South East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dun Laoghaire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wicklow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>CHO6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Dublin South City	80	66	43	36	50	17	292
Dublin South West	16	12	10	44	61	68	211
Dublin West	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kildare West Wicklow	103	103	23	17	3	0	249
<b>CHO7</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>752</b>
Laos Offaly	56	28	27	4	0	0	115
Longford Westmeath	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Louth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Meath	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>CHO8</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>115</b>
Dublin North	306	423	280	299	25	0	1,333
Dublin North Central	63	69	17	27	14	10	200
Dublin North West	175	105	131	86	72	43	612
<b>CHO9</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>2,145</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,535</b>	<b>2,706</b>	<b>1,961</b>	<b>1,373</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>10,905</b>