

5th May 2022

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Office of the General Manager
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Community Healthcare West,
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PQ 22356/22

“To ask the Minister for Health the reason that speech and language therapy services, occupational therapy services and physiotherapy services are not being provided to children with a condition (Down Syndrome) in County Roscommon; when these services will resume; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

Dear Deputy Kerrane

I refer to PQ 22356/22 uploaded on the PAD System on the 3rd May 2022 and due for response on the 16th May 2022 regarding representations that you have made to the Minister for Health concerning “the reason that speech and language therapy services, occupational therapy services and physiotherapy services are not being provided to children with a condition (Down Syndrome) in County Roscommon; when these services will resume; and if he will make a statement on the matter”. The HSE has been requested to reply directly to you on this matter. The following response outlines the position.

Please be advised that over the past few months, the process of reconfiguration of children’s services has been and still is a complex process including the transfer of children’s files and realignment of staff. Waiting lists have increased as a result of a significant number of children who were previously with the Galway Roscommon ASD Services transferring into the CDNT9. In addition a number of posts have become vacant and as with all other services the new CDNT9 (North Roscommon North East Galway Children's Disability Network Team) are experiencing difficulties in filling those positions. The additional numbers of children on the caseload together with the vacant posts continues to be a major challenge for those members of team still in post. Recruitment is ongoing however in the meantime the resources available are stretched.

The reconfiguration of staff has meant that a number of new staff have joined the team and others have moved to new teams. As in all sectors, Children’s Disability Services are finding it extremely challenging to recruit staff to fill the permanent vacancies. While we continue to actively recruit, many of the positions on the team are still vacant. Waiting list initiatives have been set up to address this with the recruitment of temporary staff, as an interim measure, but this too is challenging with the resulting impact on waiting lists and children and families who need support.

We recognise that parents may be anxious to get an appointment date for their child and we hope to link with them as soon as possible but with the large number on the waiting list, we also want to be honest with them and advise that it may take some time. In the meantime, parents can contact their child’s team if there is anything urgent that parents need immediate support with. We will endeavour to support the family as best we can. Over the next few months, our plan is to continue to support any urgent needs identified and to link with families to agree a plan on how best we can work together to support the children’s goals.

With regard to CDNT9, please be advised that there is currently just one Physiotherapist in post where they should be three. Recruitment is ongoing but particularly challenging due to unprecedented shortages in personnel in the allied health professional sector.

With regard to OT, two new Occupational Therapists have taken up duty in the last month and have completed their induction, however, these posts were filled on a temporary bases and previous experience notes that staff move on quickly as there are so many permanent posts available to them. Recruitment is ongoing with Speech and Language Therapy positions

In the meantime, under PDS children are receiving a service and prioritised based on need and not on a diagnosis. The existing CDNT 9 team members continue to support all children with disabilities and their families to the best of their ability within the resources available to them and particularly endeavour to support urgent and critical needs as they arise.

Community Healthcare West is currently recruiting staff across all disciplines for a waiting list initiative to address waiting times in all Children's Disability Network Teams.

We acknowledge that this is a stressful time for families as we work through this significant change to services for all children and young people with complex needs.

I trust that this response has clarified the matters that you have raised in this instance.

Yours sincerely



Alma Joyce
General Manager
Disability Services
Community Healthcare West