



18<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Mr. Brendan Howlin TD  
Dail Eireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ 23525/22**

**To ask the Minister for Health when the vacant occupational therapist posts and speech and language therapist posts that are allocated to the four children's disability network teams in County Wexford will be filled; his plans to ensure that an adequate service for children in County Wexford is provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Howlin,

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.*

Under the new Progressing Disability Services children with non-complex needs will be offered services through Primary Care and children with complex needs will be offered services through the Children's Disability Network Teams. Children with complex needs associated with their disabilities access services from a Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT). CDNTs are now in place across the South East and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age. These Children's Disability Networks (CDN) are aligned to the Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs). Services and supports provided are based on children's needs rather than diagnosis and regardless of where they live or which schools they attend. This aligns with the objectives of Slaintecare and the Programme for Government.

As with other areas, Disability Services within South East Community Healthcare (SECH) are experiencing significant recruitment challenges.

Across the four Wexford CDNTs there are 15 staffing vacancies (within Occupational Therapy, Psychology, Dietetic, Physiotherapy, Speech and Language and Nursing posts). Vacant posts have been advertised and in some cases re-advertised however to date we have been unsuccessful in filling vacancies from these recruitment campaigns.

The HSE/SECH continues to express posts out to current national panels. Interviews concluded in SECH for Senior Occupational Therapists on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

Staff Grade Physiotherapist positions are currently being advertised as part of a national recruitment process. In addition, a Senior Physiotherapist advertisement has recently closed and



this recruitment campaign is being progressed. A recruitment campaign for Senior Speech and Language Therapists is also being progressed for SECH.

The HSE/SECH and National Disabilities are reviewing all options to address the current vacancies as quickly as possible, however it is not possible to determine when these posts will be filled.

I can confirm that the Children's Disability Network Managers are also exploring other ways in the meantime to offer support to children and families currently waiting to access services. This includes developing webinars, group based workshops, information sessions and the development of a repository of resources for children and their families to promote and enable wellbeing at home.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Anne Ennis', written in blue ink on a light blue dotted line.

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**Ms. Anne Ennis**  
**Head of Service, Disability Service**  
**South East Community Healthcare**