

31st May, 2021

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

PQ ref 27202/22

“To ask the Minister for Health the steps that he is taking to address waiting lists for assessments and therapies for the children's disability network teams in the south-west area 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.

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 (NSP) 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. Please see table below which provides details of WTE on CDNT 10 – West Cork Children's Disability Network Team.

CDNT	Discipline	
	TOTAL	
West Cork	CDNM	1.00
	Physiotherapist	4.10
	Occupational Therapist	3.88
	Speech & Language Therapist	5.90
	Psychologist	3.81
	Social Worker	0.50
	Nursing	2.30
	Administration	<u>1.00</u>
	TOTAL WTE	21.49

In 2022, CKCH has received a further 14.5 additional posts under NSP 2022. CKCH are working with the lead agencies with respect to allocating these posts to the CDNTs. Specifically, with reference to CDNT 10, all newly enrolled children are placed on the initial pathway, as per Cork Kerry Community Healthcare Initial Pathway Policy. Initial contact is made with families within four to six weeks, followed by an Initial Team Assessment and Individual Family Support Plan meeting.

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 for ASD assessments.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare acknowledges the waiting times that parents are experiencing. We sincerely regret that any child has to wait for an assessment. We fully appreciate the level of stress that families are experiencing due to the current waiting times. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare would like to assure parents that we will continue to work on a number of initiatives aimed at reducing the waiting times for assessment within the current levels of staffing available.

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

