



**Ceannasaí Seirbhíse do  
Dhaoine Faoi Mhíchumas**

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**15<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

Mr Cian O'Callaghan, TD,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
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Dublin 2

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**PQ 4881/23** "To ask the Minister for Health the number of children on disability service waiting lists for children's disability networks teams in the Kilbarrack area; the number of additional staff recruitments that are needed to reduce this waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter" **Cian O'Callaghan TD**

Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

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 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) were established in Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City and County (CHO DNCC) in late September 2021. The reconfiguration of children's disability services has been a very significant change management project and has necessitated development of new teams, a new model of service that adheres to national policies and required development of new skill sets and new care pathways. The introduction of CDNTs represents an evidence-based fundamental shift to a child and family centered model of care. This model of service sees a family set and achieve their own goals, supported by an interdisciplinary team. The ultimate goal of this approach is to enable children to flourish at home and in their communities. The focus of CDNT service delivery is child and family centered and enabling the child and family to carry out exercises and activities at home that may enhance their family life. In this regard, CDNTs often bring groups of children and groups of parents together to learn new skills and mix with each other in person or through digital platforms, which is convenient for many families in today's world. Family members learn how to support their child's development at home, as part of their everyday life and based in evidence across the world, which has formed the framework of the CDNT working models.

Since the CDNTs were established in CHO DNCC, there have been some noticeable improvements evident in the level of service provided to children with disabilities and their families. At time of writing there are circa 3,678 children's cases open to the 12 CDNTs across CHO DNCC. This is a very high number of children with complex need accessing the specialist services via CDNTs, whilst a number of the teams also manage significant staff vacancies. CDNTs are experiencing a number of challenges, in particular recruitment and retention of key health services staff including psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, dieticians and physiotherapists among others.

Kilbarrack Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT) currently has a waiting list of 278 children. The Kilbarrack CDNT has an approved staffing of 25.2 whole time equivalents (WTEs). The current clinical staffing cohort of the team is 10.4 WTEs with the remainder of the approved posts currently vacant.

Unfortunately, there are more positions vacant on CDNTs than qualified staff available nationally and internationally, this issue is not unique to the disability services. Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City and County (CHO DNCC) Disability Services with the Central Remedial Clinic, St Michael's House and AVISTA are running a targeted international recruitment campaign for the CDNTs and interviews are ongoing.

CHO DNCC has also increased administrative support to all CDNTs, to enable existing clinical staff to devote more of their time to working directly with children and families. Once the CDNT is able to increase staffing, we hope that this will reduce the current numbers on the waiting list.

It is important to highlight that notwithstanding the level of clinical staff vacancies for clinical grades the CDNTs in CHO DNCC have increased their caseload by 654 children over the 12 months since reconfiguration.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Olive Hanley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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**Ms Olive Hanley**  
**Head of Service for Disability**