



Ceannasaí Seirbhíse do  
Dhaoine Faoi Mhíchumas

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20<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Mr Cian O'Callaghan TD,  
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Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

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**PQ 5642/23** *"To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on his plans to tackle the understaffing of the CDNT services in north County Dublin; how and when more staff will be recruited into these services; 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 centred 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 centred approach, 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 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 on evidence from across the world, which has formed the framework of the CDNT working models. The HSE and Lead Agencies (Central Remedial Clinic (CRC), AVISTA and St Michael's House) have worked closely together to manage the change process, mitigate risks and promote the new model of service across the 12 CDNTs in CHO DNCC.

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 open to the 12 CDNTs across CHO DNCC. This is a very high number of children with complex needs 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. Unfortunately, there are more positions vacant than qualified staff available nationally and internationally. CHO DNCC is experiencing vacancies ranging from 20-50% across different teams the 12 CDNTs with an average vacancy rate of 35%.

HSE CHO DNCC Disability Services with the CRC, St Michael’s House and AVISTA are running a targeted international recruitment campaign for the staff grades referenced above and interviews are ongoing. Concurrently CHO DNCC have undertaken to increase administrative support to all the CDNTs, to enable existing clinical staff to devote more of their time directly to children and families.

It is important to note and 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. The following table provides an overview of the CHO DNCC CDNT staffing levels data for January 2023:

No. of staff WTE allocation @ month end i.e. on the last day of the month	283
No. of staff WTE actually working @ month end	194
No. of staff WTE on maternity leave @ month end	20
Caseload no. @ month end	3,720
No. of new children referred Jan 2023	70
No. of children discharged during January 2023	36
Total no. of children waiting for services in CHO DNCC CDNT	2,986

Other initiatives include group work with children and families as described above and ongoing local stakeholder engagement to discuss initiatives for service delivery in 2023 with children and families.

To support retention of staff there is a significant programme of training being rolled out. This will see staff availing of a range of training, based on their personal and team training needs.

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**