



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

Office of the Head of Operations,
Disability Services/Social Care Division,
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20th March 2023

Deputy Catherine Connolly,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: catherine.connolly@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Connolly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary question, which was submitted to this department for response.

PQ 12040.23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if he will clarify whether child protection assessments are carried out in respect of all referrals of children to HSE Disability Services; if he will provide details of any analysis carried out by his Department on the operation of the HSE Disability Services referral system in the cases of children, particularly regarding the engagement between the HSE and Tusla during the child protection assessment process; if his attention has been drawn to delays in the delivery of HSE Disability Services to children as a result of delays in the carrying-out of child protection assessments by Tusla; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

91 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) are aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country and are providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age.

Regardless of the nature of their disability, where they live, or the school they attend, every child with complex needs and their families have access to the full range of family centred services and supports of their CDNT according to their individual needs. This includes universal, targeted and specialist supports, such as individual therapeutic intervention and access to specialist consultation and assessment when needed. Supports are provided as is feasible in the child's natural environments - their home, school and community.

Work is ongoing on mapping specialised services and supports, and paediatric supports available and gap analysis for children with highly complex needs, in order to develop standardised approaches to integrated pathways of support for CDNTs and Primary Care staff.

CDNTs are teams of health and social care professionals, including nursing, occupational therapy, psychology, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social work, dietetics and others. The team works closely together in a family centred model, focusing on the child's and family's own priorities.



Disability services are provided following individual assessment according to the child's individual requirements and support needs. Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) provide services for children with complex needs in line with the HSE's National Access Policy and which are prioritised based on the HSE's National Prioritisation Policy. A child protection assessment is not required in order to access CDNT service.

With regards to welfare and protection of children accessing CDNT service, in line with the Children First Act 2015 and the HSE's Child Protection and Welfare Policy:

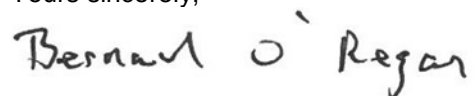
- All Lead Agencies, HSE and HSE funded voluntary organisations managing the 91 Children's Disability Network Teams have completed a risk assessment in regards to children accessing their services and a Child Safeguarding Statement
- All staff of the 91 CDNTs complete their mandatory Children First online training every 3 years
- Mandated Persons as defined in the Children First Act 2015 on CDNTs have access to additional training developed by the HSE National Children First Office.

In 2022, Tusla established its Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit and this unit implemented its first audit of health service organisations' *Child Safeguarding Statements*.

In tandem with this, the HSE's National Children First Office (NCFO) ran a Children First compliance pilot of 12 Children Disability residential and respite services across the 9 CHOs. In 2023, the NCFO intends to run this Children First Compliance Assurance with a sample of Children's Disability Network Teams.

Planning for this is in train.

Yours sincerely,



Bernard O'Regan
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations