

26<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Deputy Peadar Tóibín  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 14363/24**

*“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the reason funding has not been provided to CHO1 for disability services.”*

Dear Deputy Tóibín

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth for response.

Having examined the matter, the following outlines the position from the perspective of Donegal Disability Services, which encompasses the Children’s Disability Network Teams (CDNTs).

The funding to fill Donegal CDNT vacancies is not an issue and every effort is being made to fill vacant posts within the CDNTs. The issue that is arising for Donegal CDNTs is a reflection of a wider national workforce picture, i.e., a shortage of staff across all disciplines nationwide.

As with the national situation, Donegal Disability Services have been experiencing significant challenges in terms of recruitment and retention of staff in the four Donegal CDNTs, which are Donegal North CDNT, Donegal South West CDNT, Donegal East CDNT and Inishowen CDNT.

To address this issue, the Children’s Disability Network Managers (CDNMs) and senior HSE management are actively engaging with Human Resources (HR) in Community Healthcare, Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo (CH CDLMS) in an effort to fill all vacant posts in HSE CDNTs.

CDNTs are being given priority by HR in terms of bespoke recruitment campaigns and ongoing active recruitment processes and initiatives have been put in place to fill vacancies within the CDNTs. Such processes include rolling recruitment campaigns to facilitate a continuous intake of applications for therapy posts. Recruitment to CDNTs is also receiving priority attention by the HSE nationally, along with Minister Rabbitte’s department, DCEDIY, due to the workforce challenges in this sector.

The following is a breakdown to date of the supports in place from HR to support the recruitment and retention of staff to the CDNTs in Co Donegal:

- Continued focus on establishing panels across all grades – rolling campaigns ongoing.
- Posts are being expressed to all panels held by HR in an effort to fill.
- Information on all vacancies is tracked weekly, with follow-up on any necessary actions.



- Weekly report received from the HSE National Recruitment Service on posts it is expressing to relevant panels for CDNT vacancies.
- HR and CDNT representatives attended the “London Irish Centre Event” on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024 to promote careers in the CH CDLMS area. The event was a Donegal promotion event focusing on opportunities to live, work and invest in Donegal.
- Disability Services were represented at the jobs/recruitment fair in the London Irish Centre which was held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024.
- National CDNT Recruitment Campaign launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023 for the following grades:
  - Dietitians
  - Occupational Therapists
  - Physiotherapists
  - Psychologists
  - Social Workers
  - Speech & Language Therapists

Some 87 applications were received for the CH CDLMS area, of which 58 applications came from people currently working in the HSE, Tusla or a HSE partner agency. Interviews were arranged for March 2024 and recruitment processes for any successful candidates accepting CDNT posts are currently being progressed. A weekly update is issued to the National Disability Lead Office on the progress of this national campaign.

- The Staff CH CDLMS Facebook page is updated with information on CDNT posts on an ongoing basis.
- Monthly joint HR/CDNT meetings on recruitment and retention are held focusing on all “unable to fill” posts.
- A bursary initiative with the Atlantic Technology University (ATU) Letterkenny and Coventry University has been put in place funded by the HSE in the CH CDLMS area. 23 candidates have been awarded the bursary supporting the areas of Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Dietetics which are the relevant courses offered by ATU. 7 candidates are graduating this month, June 2024, the majority of whom will be employed in Disability Services. The remainder will come on stream in June 2025. The bursary has been advertised for the next student cohort in recent weeks. CH CDLMS has committed to funding this bursary scheme for three years to suitably qualified Health and Social Care Professionals qualifying as Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Dietitians at degree level from Coventry University, having completed initial studies at Letterkenny ATU. They receive the bursary on the basis of accepting a contract of work with CH CDLMS services.
- HR management is in the process of identifying contact points with staff representative bodies in Northern Ireland with a view to having CDNT posts advertised on their platforms.
- Engagement with Donegal County Council to advertise HSE posts on the Lookwest.ie website which is managed by the Western Development Commission.
- Enhanced media campaigns have been undertaken via local media in an effort to recruit to vacancies in Donegal CDNTs.

Such are the issues regarding vacancies at a national level that a Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026 Disability Services for Children and Young People has been developed. The Roadmap is a targeted Service Improvement Programme to achieve a quality, accessible, equitable and timely service for all children with complex needs as a result of a disability, and their families. It sets out the overall aim for Children’s Disability Services, provided by the HSE and its partner agencies; i.e., for



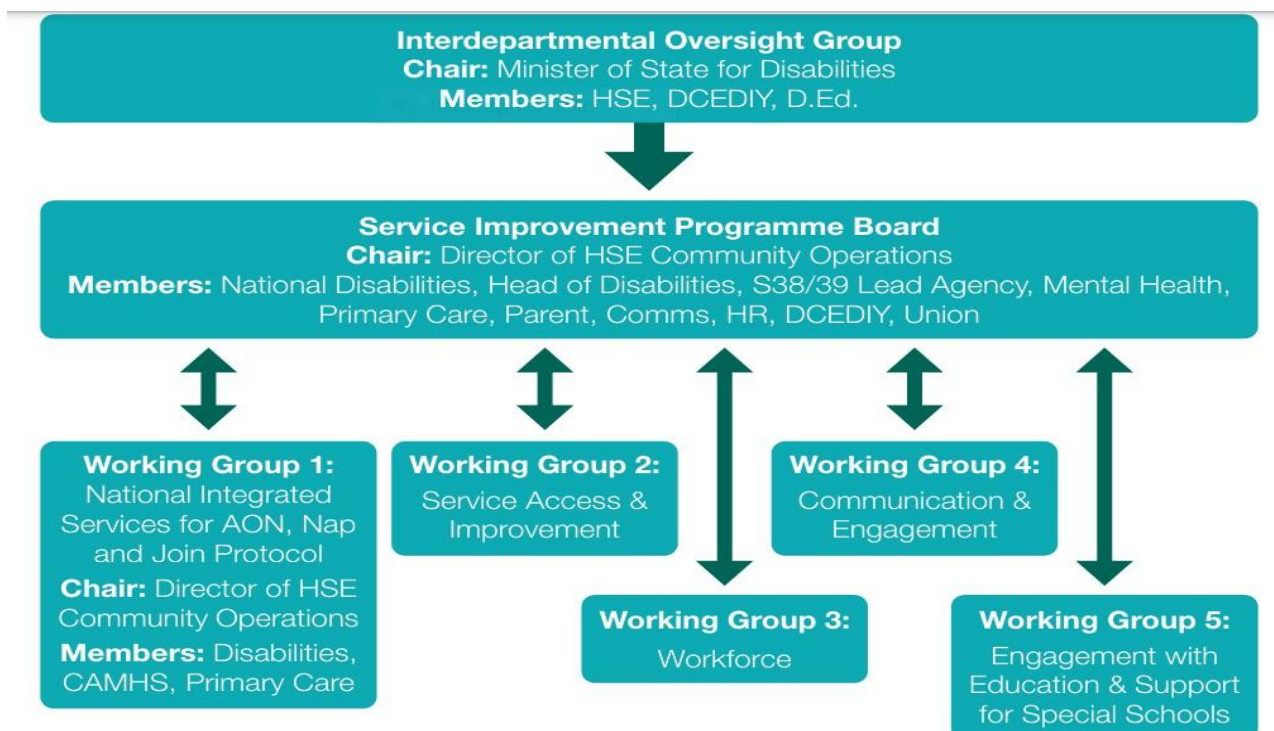
every child to have a childhood of inclusive experiences where they can have fun, learn, develop interests and skills, and form positive relationships with others in a range of different settings.

The Roadmap recognises that children and families need a service based on their needs, reduced waiting times and a timely response to their needs. Families require regular, open, accurate communication, their voices to be heard and their input to be taken on board. Families need health services to work collaboratively with each other, with the Education sector, and with the child and family, and they require an appropriate mix of evidence-informed universal, targeted and individual services based on need, in order to support their children to realise their full potential.

The Roadmap contains a detailed plan of SMART (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) actions under the following headings:

1. Integrated Services between Disabilities, Primary Care, CAMHS and Tusla
2. CDNT Service Access and Improvement including AON
3. Workforce
4. Communication and Engagement with Children and Families, and with Staff
5. Engagement with Education and Support for Special Schools

The Roadmap reaffirms the commitment of the HSE and Lead Agencies, supported by Government, to providing high quality, responsive supports and services for children with complex disabilities and their families. It provides an accountability and reporting framework, including a robust governance structure to drive, monitor and report on its implementation and delivery of supports and services. A governance structure, as set out in the diagram below, has been established to ensure the Roadmap is implemented. This sets out the accountability and reporting framework for the implementation and delivery of supports and services.





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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edel Quinn', written in a cursive style.

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**Edel Quinn**  
**Head of Service Disability CH CDLMS**  
**Ceann na Seirbhíse Míchumas**  
**Eagraíocht Chúram Sláinte Limistéar CDLMS**