



23rd February 2024

Mr. John Paul Phelan TD
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 5632/24

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the measures that are being taken to reduce the CDNT waiting list of the CHO5; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Phelan,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

I have reviewed the matter and the following is the current position.

Waitlist management with a focus on reducing waiting lists for children waiting to access Clinical Services is a top priority for the Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs).

Recruitment and Retention

As with other areas Disability Services within South East Community Healthcare (SECH) are continuing to experience significant recruitment challenges. This HSE is operating in a very competitive market as there are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals nationally and internationally. To date, SECH has taken multiple approaches to fill the posts due to these global shortages of healthcare staff and with consideration of competing internationally to appeal to staff.

Along with targeted advertising of posts on the HSE website, SECH is currently looking to expand social media footprint to reach out to different groups – outlining benefits of working for the HSE. SECH is currently recruiting eight assistant therapy posts for the region and these are currently at interview stage. SECH is also targeting schools and colleges to increase the candidate pool by making telephone contact with stakeholders and attending third level open days to promote the service and attract potential applicants. SECH has also liaised with local third level colleges with the aim of requesting an increase in places on relevant courses.

There are rolling campaigns every six months for Senior Grade Clinicians. HSE HR have attended international recruitment events to advertise posts.

As the HSE is currently operating within an embargo on staff recruitment, Disability Services have applied for a derogation from HSE National Office for approval to progress recruitment of essential clinical posts. These derogations were approved and Disability Services SECH have just completed interviews locally for all vacant clinical posts and job offers have commenced this week.

Roadmap

On 26th October 2023 and as a joint initiative the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Minister of State for Disabilities and HSE CEO announced the launch of a new HSE Roadmap to improve Children's Disability Services 2023-2026. This roadmap is a public commitment by government to support HSE Disability Services to build capacity of disability



support services, and improve access. It includes significant measures to integrate and improve access to services, expand the workforce and advance better communication and engagement with families. Following the suspension of industrial action, the HSE has commenced working on this plan and have stepped up A Roadmap Service Improvement Programme Board and related Working Groups to progress its implementation. One pillar of this action plan is dedicated to addressing waitlists for services and work has already commenced in designing a plan to reduce waitlists for Services from CDNTs.

SECH acknowledges that waiting times for CDNT services at this time are particularly stressful for children and their families, and will continue to explore a range of options and strategies to reduce waiting times for children.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Karen Fitzgerald', is positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely,'.

Karen Fitzgerald
A/Head of Service – Disability Services
South East Community Healthcare