

24th June 2024

Deputy Pádraig MacLochlainn
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ ref 11926/24

“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if she is aware that the CDNT team in Donegal east has no office of their own, a 65% staff vacancy rate and key leadership positions unfilled; and if she will urgently examine all options to resolve this crisis as soon as possible, including pooling resources with other CDNT teams in the county, until the vacancy rates improve.”

Dear Deputy MacLochlainn,

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, I can advise that whilst the eastern area of the East Donegal & Inishowen Children’s Disability Network Team (CDNT) has been experiencing a number of challenges, the service is actively working to find a solution to these difficulties via the measures set out below.

Accommodation - The eastern area team of the Donegal East and Inishowen CDNT is currently co-located with the Donegal North CDNT in Millennium Court, Pearse Road, Letterkenny. Additional office space is also being utilised to support the eastern part of the CDNT team from locations in Castlefinn, Bunrana Primary Care Centre and Manorcunningham Resource Centre. The Children’s Disability Network Manager (CDNM) also links with the Community Healthcare Network Manager (CHNM) for East Donegal in respect of CDNT outreach clinics being delivered from Newtowncunningham Primary Care Centre.

However, dedicated accommodation is required for the Donegal East CDNT and this is currently in progress under the Estates North West department via proposed plans to develop the Lifford hospital site as an interim measure until such time as the new Lifford Primary Care Centre build is completed. You will be aware of the plans further to information shared at the meeting forum you requested from the Chief Officer for Community Healthcare Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo in relation to Donegal CDNTs. This forum has now met on three occasions.

Recruitment – The recruitment process remains ongoing and Donegal East & Inishowen currently has its full complement of psychologists and will have a full complement of occupational therapists (OTs) by June 2024. The East team still has vacancies in the areas of speech & language therapy, physiotherapy and administrative support; however, it is hoped that with national campaign interviews currently taking place, the East CDNT will be in a position to recruit to the vacant clinical positions.

With regards to the key leadership position you reference, Donegal East & Inishowen CDNT was classified as one team covering two areas when national HSE mapped CDNTs onto existing Community Healthcare Network (CHN) areas. Following representation by CH CDLMS Disability



Services to national HSE and further to repointing of a position and budget, national HSE has agreed that the current Donegal East & Inishowen CDNT will be divided into two separate teams aligned with the two CHN areas. Interviews took place in March 2024 for a CDN M for Donegal East and the appointed CDN M has taken up post with effect from the 10.06.2024. She was in attendance at the most recent afore referenced Donegal CDNTs forum held on 14.06.2024.

Cross cover between CDNTS and Primary Care Services - cross cover has been organised between staff in the three CDNTS in Co. Donegal as well as with therapists in Donegal Primary Care Services for prioritised cases.

Physiotherapy – physiotherapy services for East Donegal CDNT caseload are currently being supported by physiotherapists from the Donegal South West CDNT who are providing development clinics to the younger cohort of children and assessments for home-based equipment needs. A senior private physiotherapist has also been secured on a number of occasions and to date has provided therapeutic support and intervention to children via weekly clinics from November - December 2023 and from April – May 2024.

Occupational Therapy – with the recent appointment of occupational therapists (OTs) to the East Donegal CDNT, OT clinics are currently being scheduled in the first instance for the children on the caseload with higher and more complex levels of need. OTs from Donegal North CDNT continue to assist the East team with equipment in support of more complex cases. Specialist support is also available from both the Clinical Specialist Occupational Therapist Seating/Wheelchairs service which operates under HSE Primary Care services and the national specialist service delivered by the Central Remedial Clinic (CRC).

Psychology - ongoing support and supervision to both the psychologists in the East Donegal CDNT is currently being provided by the Senior Psychologist in the Donegal Inishowen CDNT.

Speech and Language Therapy - additional support in respect of augmentative and alternative communication devices (AAC) and feeding, eating, drinking and swallowing (FEDS) difficulties is being provided to the children on the East Donegal CDNT caseload from the speech and language therapist in the Inishowen CDNT when required on a prioritised basis.

Please see below a current breakdown of the vacancies in the Donegal East CDNT and the Inishowen CDNT. The HSE Human Resources department continues to actively progress recruitment to all CDNT and Disability Services vacancies as a priority.

Overall vacancy levels in Donegal East and Donegal Inishowen CDNTs

CDNT Area	WTE assigned	Current WTE	Vacancies	Percentage
Donegal East	14.6	7	7.6	52.05%
Donegal Inishowen	13.4	10.6	2.8	20.89%



Current vacancies in Donegal East CDNT by discipline/grade

Title of position	WTE
Senior Speech & Language Therapist	0.8
Staff Grade Speech & Language Therapist	1
Senior Occupational Therapist (OT)	1
Senior Physiotherapist	1
Staff Grade Physiotherapist	1
Community Facilitator/Social Care Worker	0.8
Clinical Specialist OT (covering four CDNTs)	1
Clerical Officer V	1

Current vacancies in Inishowen CDNT by discipline/grade

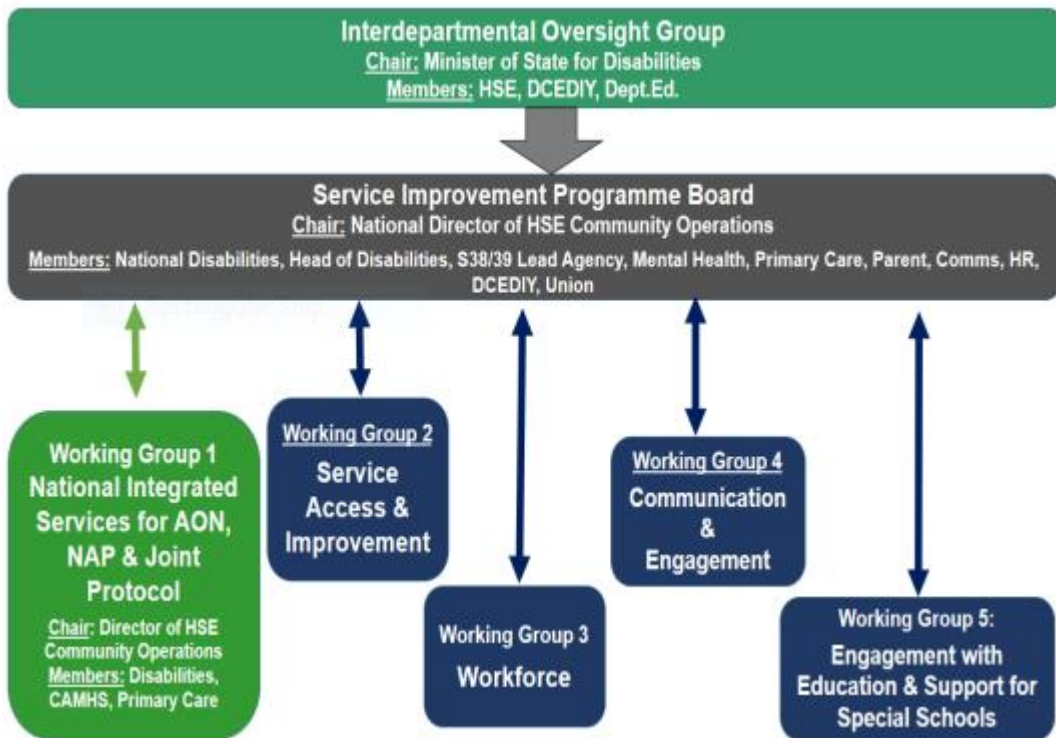
Title of position	WTE
Staff Grade Speech & Language Therapist	1
Senior Physiotherapist	0.8
Clerical Officer IV	1

A new post of Assistant National Director for Disability Workforce Planning has recently been appointed to in national HSE HR. A key priority for the postholder is recruitment to CDNT vacancies and in this regard it is understood that a number of key actions are already under way. In addition there are twenty one actions set out under the Progressing Disability Services Roadmap Action Plan 2023-2026 Workforce section to be progressed. A governance structure, as set out in the diagram below, has been established to ensure the roadmap is implemented and consists of an Interdepartmental Oversight Group led by the Minister of State for Disabilities, a Service Improvement Programme Board chaired by the HSE National Director, Community Operations and five Working Groups to work under and report into

the Service Improvement Programme Board via the National Service Improvement Lead for implementation of the Roadmap. It includes a National Integrated Services Working Group to lead on the Implementation of the HSE Primary Care, Disabilities, CAMHS Joint Protocol and the National Access Policy across Primary Care, Disabilities and Mental Health. Each Working Group has a clear



remit to lead on the progression of a specific set of actions and ensure their delivery to improve children's services.



I trust that this is of assistance but please do not hesitate to contact me if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely,

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