



Oifig an Stiúrthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,  
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta, An Chéad  
Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15, Áras Phlásóg na Rós,  
Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile, Páirc  
Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta, Caladh an  
Treoigh, Luimneach

Office of the Assistant National  
Director, National Disability Team,  
First Floor- Offices 13, 14, 15,  
Roselawn House, University Business  
Complex, National Technology Park,  
Castletroy, Limerick.

16<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [christopher.osullivan@oireachtas.ie](mailto:christopher.osullivan@oireachtas.ie)

**PQ: 36101/25**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality if consideration will be given to providing more CDNT supports to mainstream schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter*

Dear Deputy O'Sullivan,

Thank you for your Parliamentary Question referenced above, which has been forwarded to me for direct reply.

### **National Access Policy**

The National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay ensures that children are directed to the appropriate service based on the complexity of their presenting needs i.e. Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children's Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties arising from their disability.

### **Children's Disability Network Teams**

In line with the Progressing Disability Services model, 93 CDNTs, aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country, are providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age.

Each CDNT covers a specific geographical area and holds a waiting list for children with complex needs residing in that area.

The model of service for all CDNT service provision is family-centred and based on the needs of the individual child with disabilities. This includes universal, targeted and specialised supports and interventions, as appropriate to the individual child and family. It is based on the objectives of empowering and supporting parents and others who are with the child on a daily basis to facilitate the child's developmental needs.

This Family Centred Practice/ CDNT model of service ensures that supports provided are determined from family priorities. It requires that there is family involvement in the identification and measurement of achievements. It recognises that each family has its own role, values, structures, beliefs and coping styles. It is important to appropriately assess the varieties of stressors that can adversely affect family patterns of interaction and utilise that information to strengthen families. This may require the identification of social supports, resource supports, information and services.

For further information also- see report:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/progressing-disability/pds-programme/family-centred-practice/>

In addition, see attached *National Guidance for Children's Disability Network Teams on Individual Family Support Plans June 2023*,

An IFSP is a plan made by the child (as appropriate to their age), their family and the CDNT in partnership. The plan brings together the child's and family's needs, priorities and desired outcomes with the team's knowledge and expertise, in order to agree what they will focus on next. Everyone then knows who is doing what, where and when.



If an individual child's goals include one or more school based goals, for example; upskilling of educators, interventions will take place, where possible, onsite in school, pending local CDNT staffing resources, educators preferences and school space available.

The CDNTs are currently providing services and supports for over 44,000 children and strategies and supports for urgent cases on the waitlist where staffing resources allow. However, there are significant challenges for CDNTs including:

- Significant staffing vacancies
- Growth in numbers of children with complex needs as a result of their disability.
- Growth in demand for Assessment of Need, diverting further resources away from interventions

### **Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People**

The HSE's Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People is a targeted Service Improvement Programme of 60 actions to achieve a quality, accessible, equitable and timely service for all children with complex needs as a result of a disability and their families.

The Roadmap, has four Working Groups which report into a Service Improvement Programme Board every month on progress against their assigned Roadmap Actions under the themes of:

- **Integrated Children's Services**
- **Service Access and Improvement** – has responsibility for Waitlist Management and Services; Optimising Teams Efficiencies, Effectiveness and Governance; AONs overdue for completion; and the development of a National Capital plan to enable all staff of a CDNT to be co-located.
- **Workforce** Retention and Recruitment
- **Communication and Engagement**

In addition, the Cross Sectoral Group on issues for children with vulnerabilities has resumed to drive integration and collaboration between education and health services, and supports for special schools for optimal benefit and outcomes for children with disabilities.

Yours Sincerely,

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Tom McGuirk,  
General Manager, Disability Services, Access & Integration