



8th August 2025

Mr. Michael Cahill, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 41375/25

“To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the reason no permanent psychologist is currently assigned to CDNT teams in parts of Kerry, leaving schools and parents without professional behavioural support for children with autism; and if this will be addressed in the short term.”

Dear Deputy Cahill,

The HSE South West Children’s Disability Services has been requested to respond to your parliamentary question submitted to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality.

Children access autism supports and assessments from either Primary Care or from Disability Services depending on the complexity of their presenting needs. Children are allocated to the appropriate service based on the information provided at the time of referral.

Children’s Disability Network Teams (CDNT) in HSE South West were established to provide interdisciplinary supports for children and young people with complex disability needs within defined geographical areas. These teams are managed by five lead agencies; Horizons, Brothers of Charity Southern Services, Enable Ireland, St. Joseph’s Foundation and CoAction West Cork. There are fourteen CDNTs operating in HSE South West; eleven in Cork and three in Kerry.

The CDNTs in Kerry are managed by Brothers of Charity Southern Services (North Kerry CDNT 1 and South Kerry CDNT 3) and Enable Ireland (West Kerry CDNT 2).

There are twelve approved psychology posts across Kerry CDNTs at senior and basic grade levels. The table below outlines the number of posts filled and vacant. At the time of writing, 10.4 posts were successfully filled, with 0.7 staff members on leave. There are 1.6 vacant psychology posts in North Kerry CDNT 1.



Table 1: Kerry CDNT Psychology Posts

Psychology Posts	Approved WTE	Filled WTE	Filled (on leave)	Vacant WTE
CDNT 1	3.8	2.2		1.6
CDNT 2	3.4	3.2	0.2	
CDNT 3	4.8	4.3	0.5	
Totals	12.0	9.7	0.7	1.6

The HSE and its Section 38 and Section 39 Lead Agencies are operating in a very competitive global market for healthcare talent as there are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals across the globe. This is impacting on the filling of posts and as such impacts on full delivery of service to families.

HSE South West Disability Services and CDNT lead agencies continues to progress recruitment campaigns including recruitment abroad to recruit to approved vacant posts. There is a recognised national shortage of many of the staff required for CDNTs including in particular, dietitians and psychologists. The HSE is supporting the development of the CDNT workforce by progressing initiatives such as student sponsorships and apprentice programmes.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely,

**Ms. Angela O'Neill,
Head of Disability Services,
HSE South West.**