



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
Treigh, Luimneach

Office of the Assistant National
Director, National Disability Team,
First Floor- Offices 13, 14, 15,
Roselawn House, University Business
Complex, National Technology Park,
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16th July 2025

Deputy Conor D McGuinness,
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: conord.mcguinness@oireachtas.ie

PQ: 34821/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the number of children on waiting lists for services provided by children's disability network teams, by CHO area and by CDNT, at the end of each year from 2015 to 2024 and at the end of May 2025; the average length of time children have been waiting for services in each of those years; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 34824/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the actions she is taking to reduce waiting times for services provided by children's disability network teams and to ensure that all CDNTs are fully and properly staffed; if she is concerned about the current level of unmet need; at what threshold or volume of children waiting she would consider the situation to constitute a crisis; the specific plans she is putting in place to address the issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 34825/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the number of children currently waiting for services from children's disability network teams, by length of time waiting, i.e., under 1 month; 1–3 months; 3–6 months; 6–12 months; 12–18 months; and over 18 months, with a full breakdown for each CDNT and for each CHO area, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy McGuinness,

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

Childrens Disability Services

In line with the Progressing Disability Services model, all 93 CDNTs, aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country, are in place and 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 CDNTs is family-centred and based on the needs of the child. 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.

The CDNTs are currently providing services and supports for 44,000 children and strategies and supports for urgent cases on the waitlist where staffing resources allow.



Waiting List for the Childrens Disability Services

Historically the number of children waitlisted for children's disability services provided by section 38 and section 39 providers has not been available nationally. The establishment of CDNTs in 2021 has facilitated the collection of this data. A National Information Management System for all 93 CDNTs is being rolled out and when implemented, will provide current data on waiting lists and other details for all CDNTs.

Pending full roll-out to all 93 CDNTs, manual data collection is currently in place nationally as an interim measure.

The table below is the validated data for the end of May 2025 activity reports. This shows the number of children that are waiting for an initial contact with a CDNT in the 6 Regional Healthcare Areas (RHAs).

Prior to 2023, CDNT data was not collated nationally, however we can provide you with the CDNT waiting lists in December 2023 and in December 2024 by community Healthcare Area. Please see **Appendix 1**.

End of May 2025

National CDNT Interim Metrics (May2025)	HSE West and North West	HSE Midwest	HSE South West	HSE Dublin and South East	HSE Dublin Midlands	HSE Dublin and North East	Total
No. of children waiting 0-3 months for an initial CDNT contact @ month end	291	165	160	170	227	270	1283
No. of children waiting 4-6 months for an initial CDNT contact @ month end	128	133	130	145	232	258	1026
No. of children waiting 7-12 months for an initial CDNT contact @ month end	135	266	103	283	345	284	1416
No. of children waiting over 12 months for an initial CDNT contact @ month end	324	614	212	2135	2243	2274	7802
Total no. of children on the CDNT waiting list @ month end.	878	1178	605	2733	3047	3086	11527

In addition, 1,416 children (&/or their parents) who are on the CDNT waiting list participated in one or more individual and/or group intervention appointments during May 2025.

Reducing waiting lists for Children's Disability Services

The 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 may access supports from a Children's Disability Network Team or from Primary Care or from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) depending on the complexity of their needs.

Children who require a diagnostic assessment usually access these assessments through children's disability services (Children's Disability Network Teams – CDNTs or equivalent). However, some children will access these assessments through Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or through Primary Care.



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 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, which in turn reports to the Roadmap Oversight Group which was chaired by the Minister of State.

Working Group 1: Integrated Children's Services – has responsibility for the implementation of National Access Policy (NAP) and the Primary Care, Disability, CAMHS Joint Working Protocol (JWP), Equity of Access to Aids and Appliances across all CHOs; and the Review of HSE Tusla Joint Protocol.

Working Group 2: 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.

Working Group 3: Workforce – has 21 actions dedicated to Retention of specialised CDNT staff, Recruitment of new graduates and experienced staff for all CDNTs Deployment of Students/Trainees/New Graduates; and Development of Existing Staff.

Children's Disability Network Team vacancies are reported on through an annual survey to capture the full workforce across the HSE, Section 38 and Section 39 funded teams. The survey captures staffing levels across various disciplines and grades, providing a snapshot of the workforce across 93 teams. The latest Children's Disability Network Teams workforce survey available was conducted on 9th April 2025.

There are currently 2,009 WTE working in 93 x Children's Disability Network Teams across the country. There has been a net increase of + 415 WTE in the past 18 months and a decrease in vacancy rates from 29% to 18% since October 2023

The continued increase in staffing and reduction in vacancies is a welcome and needed increase, however there is an acute need for sustained improvement in the workforce profile to meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families and to address the lengthy waiting lists for services.

Workforce/Recruitment

Work continues at pace to increase staffing rates across CDNTs. The HSE and CDNT Lead Agencies work actively and collaboratively to improve and optimise recruitment into CDNTs, which in turn has a positive impact on retaining the staff currently working in CDNTs.

Actions to enhance our attraction, recruitment and retention efforts are delivered at a multi-agency level and include:

- Significant recruitment efforts and activities across HSE, Section 38s and Section 39s which has reduced the vacancy rate to 18%.
- Sustained outreach and engagement with applicant pools and future potential workforce through multiple engagements to secondary schools, Higher Education Institutes, international applicants. These engagements represent the wider HSE, Section 38s and Section 39s and showcase CDNTs and Disabilities as career destination.
- The first ever virtual career fair "Disabilities Virtual Career Fair" took place on 15th May 2025 representing CDNTs and all Disability services across the professions.
- Ongoing webinars with applicant pools dovetailing with job offers with a noted increase in registrations with CareerHub talent pool and increase in job uptake following webinars.
- Direct support to Section 38s and 39s CDNT workforce efforts- funded agencies can now access HSE national recruitment panels and new grad panels which increases their ability to fill roles in an expedited way through accessing the relevant candidate panels. Section 38s and 39s now use www.hse.ie/jobs and HSE talent pools registered with the HSE's CareerHub portal (48k+ registered applicant pools) which substantially expands their advertising and engagement into targeted applicant pools.



- Launch of under/ post graduate sponsorship programme to job match 2025 relevant graduates into roles in CDNTs
- Increased clinical placements – placements into CDNTs have increased by 30% in the past 2 years.

These activities form part of an ongoing suite of initiatives to populate vacancies, increase retention rates and improve capacity to deliver CDNT services and will continue throughout 2025.

National Disability Authority Review

In addition to the above measures, the HSE has commissioned the National Disability Authority (NDA), an independent statutory body providing evidence-informed advice and research to Government on disability policy and practice, to complete the 3-part review as follows:

1. Review of CDNT service model in operation
2. Determine optimal staffing for CDNTs
3. Review of the National Therapy Service in 16 Special Schools Pilot.

The Project Outline has been agreed between the HSE, National Disability Authority, DCEDIY and Minister of State. The Review commenced in February and will be completed by end of 2025.

Yours Sincerely,

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



Appendix 1

Table 1: National CDNT Interim Metrics end of December 2023

National CDNT Interim Metrics (December 2023)	CHO 1	CHO 2	CHO 3	CHO 4	CHO 5	CHO 6	CHO 7	CHO 8	CHO 9	Total
No of children waiting 0-3 months for an initial contact @month end	357	149	303	150	87	34	149	377	75	1681
No of children waiting 4-6 months for an initial contact @month end	257	213	295	147	112	85	114	401	82	1706
No of children waiting 7-12 months for an initial contact @month end	327	260	308	176	209	231	341	505	191	2,548
No of children waiting over 12 months for an initial contact @month end	374	378	431	467	1217	1049	2029	1064	2484	9493
Total no. of children on the CDNT waiting list @ month end	1315	1000	1337	940	1625	1399	2633	2347	2832	15428

Table 2: National CDNT Interim Metrics end of December 2024

National CDNT Interim Metrics (December 2024)	CHO 1	CHO 2	CHO 3	CHO 4	CHO 5	CHO 6	CHO 7	CHO 8	CHO 9	Total
No of children waiting 0-3 months for an initial contact@month end	109	175	247	157	82	61	151	296	48	1326
No of children waiting 4-6 months for an initial contact@month end	70	102	157	120	83	74	153	178	62	1699
No of children waiting 7-12 months for an initial contact @month end	58	136	298	104	150	138	325	282	128	1619
No of children waiting over 12 months for an initial contact @month end	405	242	605	305	1091	1228	1942	800	2358	6871
Total no. of children on the CDNT waiting list @ month end	642	655	1307	686	1406	1501	2571	1556	2596	11515