

**Head of Service Primary Care**

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Mr Cian O'Callaghan TD
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
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Dublin 2.

Email: cian.ocallaghan@oireachtas.ie

PQ 49799/25 – *“To ask the Minister for Health the measures her Department is taking to address the extensive waiting lists for children seeking appointments for speech and language therapy; the number of children currently on the waiting list in both primary care, and the Children’s Disability Network Teams, for IHA Dublin north county and IHA Dublin north city and west; the number of children waiting for over a year in these areas; the number of children waiting over three years in these areas, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter” - Cian O’Callaghan TD*

Dear Deputy O' Callaghan,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question you submitted to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality for a response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The table below outlines the number of Children currently on Primary Care Speech & Language Therapy (SLT) waiting lists in Integrated Health Area (IHA) Dublin North County (DNC) and Dublin North City & West (DNCW)

Speech & Language Therapy Data	No. of children waiting over one year	No. of children waiting over 3 years are transfers from CDNT	No. of children on Waiting List
Dublin North City & West	1145	16	2555
Dublin North County	1031	1	2774
Total	2176	17	5329

In an effort to shorten waiting times in Primary Care, the following targeted initiatives are being undertaken:

- Group therapy is provided when clinically appropriate, group therapy facilitates seeing as many children as possible at the same time while meeting their needs.
- The waiting time for parent focused interventions (e.g. Hanen parent programmes) are managed across the networks to ensure that waiting times are equalised and this in turn increases the capacity to offer programmes in a timely manner.
- Service focuses on managing the waiting lists across clinics / networks to ensure they are comparable.

- Support and cover is provided to clinics who may have vacancies from other clinics. Cross cover where vacancies exist, aimed at equalising waiting times across the areas.
- Consistent focus on the timely filling of all vacancies as soon as they arise. Newly created local senior panel and staff grade national panel.
- Constant focus of evidence based service provision and adaptation by supporting staff in continuous professional development.
- Increased focus on case management and liaison with Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Children Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) to support no wrong door approach and to ensure children are waiting for the service that will meet their needs.
- Information talks and resource packs are provided to parents of children under 6 years of age who are waiting for assessment. This provides information on early Speech and Language development and how to support communication development at home. Advice clinics are available to those parents whose children are on the waiting list but this service is also open to the wider community.
- The HSE website contains links and supports for families and can be accessed by visiting <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/dublinnw/therapy/>

Dublin North West Speech & Language Therapy team also support the roll out of Early Talk Boost under Equal Start with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth. Early Talk Boost is a nine-week prevention and early intervention programme delivered in early childhood settings. In Dublin North City the under 3's pathway facilitates all children under 3 receiving an SLT assessment within 1-3 months of receipt of referral and an evidence based early intervention within 6-12 months dependent on resources. This will be reviewed and extended across areas in due course.

Under the National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young people with Disability & Developmental delay, when a child's service is transferred, the receiving service will place the child's name on their waiting list by the original date of referral. This has led to an increase in demand for services and one-to-one therapy within the Primary Care Speech & Language service.

Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) are inter-disciplinary teams that provide services to children with complex needs arising from a disability. Professionals from a range of disciplines work collaboratively within the team, thus waiting lists are not maintained for individual disciplines, as doing so would not reflect the integrated and collaborative nature of the service delivery model.

Information regarding waiting lists is provided by each CDNT to National Disabilities by way of monthly metrics. The purpose of the monthly metrics is to gather baseline information on CDNT service demand and service provision.

This suite of metrics was developed by National Disabilities, seeking data for waiting times at month end in the categories 0-3 months, 4-6 months, 7-12 months and over 12 months. In this regard, the gathering of CDNT waiting time data is based on these categories as opposed to your specific request of the breakdown in years and months for individual discipline therapy.

The table below provides the most recent data available which shows the number of children that are waiting for an initial contact with CDNT's in Integrated Health Area Dublin North County (IHA DNC) and Integrated Health Area Dublin North City & West (IHA DNCW). This information is accurate as of 1st September 2025.

	No. of children waiting 0-3 months	No. of children waiting 4-6 months	No. of children waiting 7-12 months	No. of children waiting over 12 months	Total
North Inner City CDNT	3	7	10	31	51
Finglas CDNT	3	19	21	63	106
Clontarf CDNT	7	3	8	31	49
Swords CDNT	14	13	28	202	257
Balbriggan CDNT	10	9	6	194	219
Blanchardstown CDNT	2	1	19	98	120
Blakestown CDNT	5	1	8	330	344
Cabra CDNT	0	5	12	126	143
Coastal CDNT	4	2	4	15	25
Coolock CDNT	0	2	6	62	70
Ballymun CDNT	6	3	5	83	97
Kilbarrack CDNT	1	2	4	184	191

Please be assured Disability Services IHA DNC and IHA DNCW lead agencies are working to improve the waiting times experienced by some children. The CDNT's support families of children whilst they are on the waiting list through various waiting list initiatives.

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

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Forde
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HSE Integrated Health Areas of Dublin North County and
Dublin North City & West