



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,
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25th September 2025

Deputy Paul McAuliffe,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: paul.mcauliffe@oireachtas.ie

PQ: 50197/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the action being taken to address the gap in community disability services for children between 16 and 18 years; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Mc Auliffe,

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

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.

Children's Disability Network Teams

93 Children's Disability Network Teams (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.

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 almost 45,000 children and strategies and supports for urgent cases on the waitlist where staffing resources allow.

The HSE's Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People, 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, is well advanced in its delivery

The Roadmap has four Working Groups and by year end, 50 of its 60 goals will have been achieved. The remaining goals and new initiatives will continue being implemented into and throughout 2026 to drive ongoing service development. These include:

- Ongoing recruitment and CDNT staff retention initiatives (see below)
- Development of a **National Online Resources Platform** to provide one reliable source of critical information and supports for children with disabilities and their families, awaiting and in health services, that are easy to understand, accessible, timely, transparent and useful at all stages of their engagement with services.
- Implementation of a robust **National Communications Plan** at National Regional and local levels to provide more consistent, regular, transparent, and factual and useful information for key stakeholders and most importantly for families.



- The Roadmap's Service Improvement Programme Board has approved a **standardised Initial CDNT pathway** for children from waitlist to completion of their Initial Contact intervention.
- Work is now commencing on developing an onward, standard **CDNT Service pathway** from the Initial Contact intervention through services to discharge, to drive consistency of practice across all 93 teams, fair access to services for all children based on need, and clarity for families.

While there are almost 45,000 on the CDNT caseload currently, there are 10,579 on the CDNT waiting list.

However, 1,052 children (&/or their parents), who are on the CDNT waiting list, participated in one or more individual and/or group intervention appointments during August 2025.

In addition, between Jan 1st 2025 and Aug 31st 2025:

- Although 6,998 new children were referred to CDNTs, CDNT waiting list has been reduced by 18% from 12,920 to 10,579 children
- Open CDNT caseload has increased by 5% from 42,836 to 44,994
- 4,950 children have received their Initial Contact intervention.

The CDNTs continue to optimise their clinical resources available, providing online and in person group and one on one interventions based on individual children and families' needs and for waitlisted children, drop in or planned advice clinics. Where resources allow, one on one interventions are provided where critical.

With regard to a gap in service provision for those aged 16 to 18, it is important to note that the CDNT services are for children with complex needs arising from their disability who are aged from birth to 18 or when they leave post primary school, whichever is later.

In addition, the CDNT service model includes supporting the young person and their family in transition planning from CDNT services into day service supports (school leavers programme), 3rd level education, work opportunities where appropriate and team resources allow.

Ongoing Actions to address waiting lists

As of April 2025 there were 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 most recent CDNT Workforce Review Report (based on workforce review in April 2025) is now available on the HSE Website at the following link:

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

This report shows continuing increase in workforce in CDNT's and a reduction in vacancy rate.

Workforce: Recruitment and Retention

There are ongoing recruitment initiatives and efforts to fill funded vacancies and 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 38s 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.
- First sponsorship programme for final year under and post graduate students of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and social worker was run this year with all graduates now paneled with the HSE being offered a post in a CDNT. This programme will be extended, pending funding, to 2026 graduates and to include dietetics.
- Increased student placements on CDNTs to grow our own workforce. Student placements in CDNTs have increased by 55% 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 Disability services and will continue throughout 2025.

Yours Sincerely,

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