

**Ceann na Seirbhíse Míchumas**

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Slainte
Seirbhísi Pobaill (An Cabhán, Dún na
nGall, Liatroim, Muineachán &
Sligeach)
Áras Isacc Butt, Bealach Féich,
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19th October 2025

Mr Brendan Smith T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ ref 50219/25

“To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the progress to date in reducing waiting lists for children with additional needs accessing therapies in Cavan and Monaghan; and if she will make a statement on the matter.” - Brendan Smith

Dear Deputy Smith,

I refer to your parliamentary question above which has been referred to me for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Monaghan CDNT

The Monaghan Children's Disability Network Manager (CDNM) has advised that the team is currently offering the below waiting list initiatives in line with its current staffing levels and time related savings:

- Manager's Clinic – consultation and planning for service provision. Weekly meeting scheduled with CDNM.
- Family Forum – manager and therapists available. Opportunity to receive update on the service, hear from other parents, support family representatives, guest speakers.
- Workshop – Making Sense of Sensory (provides 1:1 session with parent and child following completion of workshop).
- Speech & Language intervention from Communi Kids procured.
- Psychology intervention from Wynand Gerber procured.

Recruitment and retention of staff is ongoing nationally and across local areas. The following initiatives are ongoing:

- Community Services Cavan Donegal Leitrim Monaghan Sligo (CS CDLMS) established a bursary scheme in 2023, with students in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Dietetics programmes in Letterkenny Atlantic Technological University supported to complete their professional degree programme in a UK based college and in return work for services in CS CDLMS. Of the twenty three bursaries awarded to date, approximately twelve of these are or will be assigned to posts in Disability Services, including CDNTs, within CS CDLMS.
- Under the PDS Roadmap, the Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) will receive a number of new development Therapy Assistants posts across CS CDLMS in 2025. It is understood that the number of posts is to be confirmed by national HSE further to its negotiations with the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.
- The local Cavan Monaghan HR Office has rolling campaigns in place to fill the current vacant CDNT positions.

- Interim CDNT Head of Discipline posts for HSE CDNTs in the Dublin & North East Health Region are advertised to support clinical governance and supervision within CDNTs. Enhanced discipline specific supports in addition to a discipline manager grade should support recruitment and retention of CDNT staff.

Outsourcing to Private Providers

Monaghan CDNT maximises the current utilisation of voluntary and private Disability Service Providers for children on CDNT waiting lists to ensure optimization for delivery of assessments and where appropriate, interventions, based on individual provider's capacity and capability.

- Monaghan CDNT has a list of Private Providers and Voluntary Providers that it currently utilises to complete assessments and some interventions.
- The full list across the CS CDLMS has been collated and any new entries to the private market are being monitored and or sourced.
- Monaghan CDNT has a mechanism in place where it is currently outsourcing assessments and interventions based on the provider's capacity and capability.
- Monaghan CDNT is aware of the demand on the Private and Voluntary Providers capacity and therefore books assessments and interventions well in advance to ensure access to all available places.

Cavan CDNT

The Cavan Children's Disability Network Manager (CDNM) has advised that the Cavan CDNT is continuing to work on reducing the waiting times for children to access services. In line with the current staffing levels whereby vacancies have yielded related savings, the following waitlist supports and initiatives have been put in place in Cavan CDNT:

- Diagnostic assessments, cognitive assessments, and discipline specific assessments have been outsourced to private providers.
- Where all posts of a particular discipline are vacant on the team, as was the case with psychology until recently, intervention support by private providers in crisis cases has been sought.
- Temporary changes of grading of posts to senior/staff grade or therapy assistant roles, where recruitment of same is easier and so as to ensure staffing levels are maintained as much as possible to provide intervention and support to families. Some of these temporary regraded post contracts will be extended for another 12 months.
- Use of therapy assistant posts to support clinicians in service provision.
- Use of recruitment agencies to source staff where Enable Ireland's normal recruitment pathways have been unsuccessful.
- Staffing levels have improved in the last 12 months, and the team is systematically working through the longest waiters on the waiting list.

Recruitment and retention of staff is ongoing nationally and across local areas. Measures in place include:

- Relocation packages for overseas candidates
- Student scholarships
- Local newspapers in northern border counties are being used to advertise vacant posts
- Supporting student placements to encourage future recruitment to the service

Staffing levels on the Cavan CDNT have been significantly reduced for the past two years, with less than fifty percent of posts filled at times. This has had a significant impact on the ability of the Cavan CDNT to provide services and has led to long waiting times for children to access services. Staffing levels have gradually increased over the course of the year in relation to Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and more recently Psychology. This has allowed the

team to commence a review of children on the waiting list, which is reducing the number of children waiting for over 12 months for services. There remains a much reduced speech and language therapy staffing level (1.5 WTE in post) on the Cavan CDNT despite ongoing recruitment efforts. Recruitment remains a significant challenge due to the following:

- The use of private services to address the unmet need as a result of staff vacancies is also encouraging staff to move into the private sector from a financial point of view.
- The numbers of health professionals graduating each year does not meet the nationwide demand for clinicians.
- The complexity of the caseload in Disability Services does not attract some clinicians to work in the area.

Enable Ireland is continuing to actively engage in recruitment opportunities to fill the remaining vacancies on the team.

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,

Edel Quinn

Head of Service Disability Services

Community Services Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo

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