

**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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30th September 2025

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

Re: PQ ref 50220/25

“To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the progress to date in recruiting additional therapists for disability services for 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.

Cavan CDNT

The Enable Ireland led Children's Disability Network Manager (CDNM) Cavan has advised that currently there are 8.46 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) vacant positions on the team. This is an improving scenario from the start of the year when there were 12.64 WTE vacant positions.

Recruitment remains a significant challenge due to:

- The use of private services to address the unmet need arising from staff vacancies in public sector services, is 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.

Staffing levels have increased in the disciplines of Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. This has allowed the team to commence a review of children on the waiting list, which will reduce the number of children waiting for over 12 months for services. In addition, the Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT) has recently filled 1.9 WTE Psychology posts. However, a significant challenge remains in recruiting to the discipline of Speech and Language Therapy.

There is a requirement to provide new staff taking up posts with appropriate induction, training and supervision. It takes a few months before a new staff member gets to the point of working

with a full caseload independently, particularly when the staff member is a new graduate or has limited experience when working in the area of complex disability.

The Enable Ireland led Cavan CDNT has already engaged, and continues to engage, private providers to carry out assessments.

It is important to highlight that while private providers help address service gaps, their involvement places additional demands on the CDNT. Staff must allocate time to support these providers and carry out quality assurance checks to ensure that the services delivered meet required standards.

Cavan CDNT continue to review all options with regards to recruitment of staff including the introduction of relocation packages for overseas candidates.

Monaghan CDNT

The CDNT in Monaghan is a HSE led CDNT. The Monaghan CDNM has advised that there are currently 9.9 WTE vacant positions on the team, again an improving scenario from the beginning of the year when there were 11.3 WTE vacant positions on the team. The CDNM has completed the appropriate forms requesting the backfill of the vacant posts. Monaghan CDNT continues to liaise with HSE Human Resources to progress the advertisement of all vacancies and the recruitment to same. It is envisaged that there will be a decrease in the vacancy rate in Q4 2025 due to a number of recruitment campaigns under way for which a number of applications have been received. Monaghan CDNT currently has vacancies in administration and the following disciplines:

- Psychology
- Speech & Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Social Work
- Nursing

Recruitment and retention of staff within CDNTs, and the wider Disability sector, is ongoing nationally and across local areas. The following initiatives are ongoing:

- 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 CDNTs will receive a number of new development Therapy Assistants posts across CS CDLMS in 2025. It is understood that these figures are 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 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.

In line with the current staffing levels which have yielded related savings, the following waitlist supports and initiatives have been put in place in Monaghan CDNT:

- Workshop – Making Sense of Sensory (provide 1:1 session with parent and child following completion of workshop) procured.
- Speech & Language Intervention from Communi Kids procured.
- Psychology intervention from Wynand Gerber procured.

The following measures are also in place in Monaghan CDNT by way of support to reduce the impacts of staff shortages:

- Manager's Clinic – consultation and planning for service provision. Weekly meeting scheduled with Children's Disability Network Manager.
- Family Forum – manager and therapists attend with Family Forum Reps the Family Forum to which all families of children on the CDNT caseload are invited. The Family Forum provides an opportunity to receive updates on the service, hear from other parents, support family representatives and hear from guest speakers on topics of interest to families of children with complex disabilities.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Edel Quinn
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Community Services Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo
Seirbhísi Pobail An Cabhán, Dún na nGall, Liatroim, Muineachán & Sligeach