



9th May 2022

Mr. Johnny Mythen T.D.
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 22238/22

To ask the Minister for Health the current waiting list broken down by waiting times for the children's disability network team in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Mythen,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

I have reviewed the matter and the following is the current position.

I refer to the above. In my most recent response PQ 12976/22 issued on the 21st of March 2022 I wish to confirm that the position remains the same.

There have been significant year on year increases in the number of children applying for assessments (including Autism Spectrum Disorder) and all disability services which has led to delays in timeframes. It is acknowledged that given increased referral rates and demands for assessments and Disability Services, there is a requirement for additional resources to meet current demand. Additionally in line with public health guidance, at the outset of the pandemic, these services, along with many other services, were significantly reduced to limit exposure to Covid-19 which has impacted on waiting lists.

Under the new Progressing Disability Services children with non-complex needs will be offered services through Primary Care and children with complex needs will be offered services through the Children's Disability Network Teams. Children with complex needs associated with their disabilities access services from a Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT). CDNT's are now in place across the South East and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age. These Children's Disability Networks (CDN) are aligned to the Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs). Services and supports provided are based on children's needs rather than diagnosis and regardless of where they live or which schools they attend. This aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and with the objectives of Slaintecare and the Programme for Government.

The number of children waiting in County Wexford pre-reconfiguration of services was 445 and this number is likely to increase.

As with other areas all disability services within CHO SECH are experiencing significant recruitment challenges to Children's Disability Network Teams. I can confirm that SECH received 9 new posts in 2021 and 26 new posts have been approved in 2022. The HSE are actively recruiting



to fill these posts along with trying to fill current vacancies which will enable the teams to increase the provision of assessment and intervention.

The HSE regrets the difficulties in accessing multidisciplinary assessments for ASD and are seeking to reduce the waiting times and address issues arising for all children and their families through a number of measures including:

- The HSE continues to fill approved posts in line with the HSE Recruitment and National Pay Bill Management Framework
- Waiting list validation is in operation with a particular focus on those who are waiting longest.
- Due to the lengthy waiting list funding has been secured to outsource ASD assessments privately across SECH and there is active engagement with procurement to progress this.

We are acutely aware of the high demand for services in our CHO and the impact of delays in accessing services has on the children and their families. In the meantime, the Children's Disability Network Managers are exploring different ways to offer support to children and families currently waiting to access services.

I assure you, my team and I will continue to work towards improved access to services with a focus on rolling out universal and targeted care pathways for children and families.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Ennis".

Anne Ennis
Head of Service – Disability Services
South East Community Healthcare