

15<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Mairead Farrell TD  
Dail Eireann  
Kildare St  
Dublin 2

**PQ 56465/23**

**“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth his plans to address lengthy waiting lists and staffing issues for child disability services, such as speech and language, occupational and behavioural therapy in areas such as CDNT7 in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.**

Dear Deputy Farrell

I refer to PQ 56465/23 uploaded on the PAD System on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and due for response on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 regarding representations that you have made to the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth concerning " his plans to address lengthy waiting lists and staffing issues for child disability services, such as speech and language, occupational and behavioural therapy in areas such as CDNT7 in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter". The HSE has been requested to reply directly to you on this matter. The following response outlines the position at the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Children's Disability Network Teams in Community Healthcare West provide support, care and therapy to children and their families across Galway, Mayo and Roscommon and we know that this work makes a difference. The CDNTs provide services for children with complex needs. Children's services locally have reconfigured in line with the national policy of Progressing Disability Services. In practice, this means services are now provided under a 0 to 18 years of age model based on their level of need rather than diagnosis. Services are delivered in line with Family Centred Practice under Individual Family Service Plans.

The staff vacancy rate for CDNT 7 North Galway area is at 31% overall with a total of 24.6 WTE staff working in this Team. A Physiotherapist Assistant, Social Worker and part time Psychologist recently commenced working in CDNT 7 which increased the staffing levels by 2.6 WTE.

A recently devised Service Plan has been developed for CDNT 7 and is being implemented. This includes all families having an updated Individualised Family Service Plan in 2024 in line with Progressing Disability Services. Running in parallel, will be an increased focus of intervention delivery with application of universal and targeted supports for families currently waiting.

At this time, our staff and the families we support are coping with waiting times and staffing shortages which means that often our service falls short of what people and families expect and what our staff would want to deliver. Due to the challenges in recruitment, there is a significant impact on the number of children awaiting intervention from CDNT7. We are working to recruit more staff and we are working with the staff we have to make the most of our team time and expertise and to keep families better informed.

Intensive recruitment efforts are ongoing through local and national panels. Disability Service Managers meet frequently with HR to progress the recruitment of vacant posts into CDNTs. An overseas recruitment programme is currently being rolled out in conjunction with National HSE HR. A national campaign has recently been launched by the HSE to recruit specifically to CDNTs and it is planned for CDNT7 to utilise this recruitment campaign to support address vacancies.

Family Forums have been rolled out across Community Healthcare West commencing June 2023. Two forums have been held in all CDNT areas to date in Community Healthcare West. Family forums provide an opportunity for families to engage with local management and provide a dedicated space to hear parent's views and ideas, focusing on the needs of their children and their families.

The HSE has committed to completing an internal review of the delivery of services in CDNT 7 which is due to commence by the end of January 2024.

We will continue to work to make a difference, make changes and build a sustainable and better service for children.

I trust that this response has clarified the matter that you have raised in this instance.

Yours sincerely



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General Manager  
Children's Disability Services  
Community Healthcare West