



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

Office of the Head of Operations,  
Disability Services/Community Operations,  
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369

Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

8<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Deputy Mark Ward,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
e-mail: [mark.ward@oireachtas.ie](mailto:mark.ward@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Ward,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary question, which was submitted to this department for response.

**PQ 57653/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of vacancies in Children's Disability Services; the plans to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**PQ 57654/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health the progress made in the recruitment of 85 WTE posts for Children's Disability Network Teams announced in June 2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**PQ 57655/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health if all CHO areas now have a Children Disability Network Team in place; the staffing contingent of each; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

The HSE acknowledges the challenges in meeting the demand for children's disability services and is acutely conscious of how this impacts on children and their families. A number of service improvements are being introduced that, when implemented, will help improve access to services for children with disabilities and developmental delays.

The implementation of the Progressing Disability Services for Children & Young People (PDS) programme is agreed Government and HSE policy. This policy supports the reconfiguration of children's disability services to provide equitable, child and family centred services based on need rather than diagnosis. The PDS programme will ensure that services are provided for children with complex needs regardless of where they live or where they go to school.

The Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS) model addresses the previous inequity in service provision whereby there may have been an excellent service for some children and little or no service for others. This variance may have been linked to diagnosis, age group or geography. Under the PDS programme children's disability services are changing from

diagnosis based to needs based, so that all children with a disability or developmental delay have access to the right service based on their needs no matter where they live.

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 rather than based on diagnosis. Many children and adults with a disability who have support needs can be effectively supported within mainstream child and adult health services. This policy will provide a single point of entry, signposting parents and referrers to the most appropriate service (Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children's Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties).

The HSE is committed to the full implementation of the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme (PDS). PDS is a significant change programme for the provision of services and supports for children from birth to 18 years of age, in line with Sláintecare and the Programme for Government, in order to:

- Provide a clear pathway and fairer access to services for all children with a disability
- Make the best use of available resources for the benefit of all children and their families
- Ensure effective teams are working in partnership with families and with education staff to support children with a disability to reach their full potential.

PDS aligns with two clear objectives of The Sláintecare Report to:

- Provide the majority of care at or as close to home as possible
- Create an integrated system of care with healthcare professionals working closely together.

### **Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs)**

In line with the PDS model, resources assigned to children's disability services are allocated to the 0 – 18 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) rather than to a dedicated early intervention team or dedicated school age team.

91 Children's Disability Networks (CDN) are aligning to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country and each Children's Disability Network will have one CDNT providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age. Early Intervention Teams and School Age Teams already in place are reconfiguring into 0-18 CDNTs. On full reconfiguration of children's disability services into CDNTs, every child across the country with complex needs arising from their disability will have access to a Children's Disability Network Team.

CDNTs are teams of health and social care professionals, including nursing, occupational therapy, psychology, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social work and others. The team works closely together in a family centred model, focusing on the child's and family's own priorities. Once all teams are in place, every child with complex needs will have access to a team, regardless of the nature of their disability, where they live, or the school they attend.

Children and their families will have access to the full range of services and supports of the CDNT according to their individual needs. This includes universal, targeted and specialist supports, such as individual therapeutic intervention and access to specialist consultation and assessment when needed. Supports will be provided as is feasible in the child's natural environments - their home, school and community.

The first step for all areas is the reconfiguration of existing staff resources into CDNTs. The staffing mix available in each area will be influenced by the historical development of services. For example, some areas may have a significant number of nurses available for reconfiguration, others may have family support workers or early educators.

Since 2019, 285 development posts have been allocated to children's disability services across the country. This is broken down as follows:

- 100 posts provided in NSP 2019
- 100 posts provided in NSP 2021
- 85 posts for services in special schools approved mid 2021

The allocation of posts by CHO is summarised in table below.

<b>Allocation of Development Posts by CHO</b>			
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2021 Special School Posts</b>
<b>CHO1</b>	12	14.7	1
<b>CHO2</b>	3.5	11.1	4.4
<b>CHO3</b>	12	13.4	0
<b>CHO4</b>	6	7.5	5.8
<b>CHO5</b>	15	11.7	4.3
<b>CHO6</b>	3.5	6.7	23.69
<b>CHO7</b>	13	10.7	15.9
<b>CHO8</b>	19	12.3	2.65
<b>CHO9</b>	16	11.9	27.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>85.49</b>

The range of posts recruited / in recruitment in 2021 include; dietitians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech & language therapists, nurses and some administrative support. These posts have been assigned based on a number of factors, including the existing ratio of staff to the number of children with disabilities in each area.

### **85 Additional posts for the Childrens' Disability Network Teams**

The HSE was advised of the Government decision to approve the recruitment of 85 additional posts for on-site services to special schools in June '21. At that time, each Community Healthcare Organisation was advised of the allocation to their area and commenced engagement with their Lead Agencies to agree the most appropriate allocation of disciplines across the Children's Disability Network Teams. These decisions were informed by the skill set, location and preferences of existing staff. The table included in Appendix 1 outlines the posts agreed for recruitment.

All of the posts are being recruited by the relevant Lead Agency and are currently at various stages of the recruitment process. A high number of posts are allocated to the Dublin CHO areas where recruitment is particularly challenging.

With regard to the number of vacancies in Children's Disability Services, at 30th Sept 2021 there were 27.5 posts filled with a further 12 at the contracting stage.

A staffing census of the CDNTs is currently being undertaken to help identify gaps and to inform a workforce plan for the sector.

Services in most parts of the country have now reconfigured to CDNTs. The remaining teams will be established before the end of 2021, thereby all 91 CDNTs will be in place and delivering services at that time.

The table below outlines the current status of the CDNTs in each of the nine Community Healthcare areas.

<b>CHO</b>	<b>Status</b>
1	7 CDNTs in place since 20/9/21
2	6 CDNTs in place since 11/10/21

	3 CDNTs in Mayo to be established in Dec '21
3	7 CDNTs in place
4	14 CDNTs in place
5	12 CDNTs in place since 27/9/21
6	7 CDNTs in place since 13/9/21
7	11 CDNTs in place since 20/9/21
8	4 CDNTs in place in Meath / Louth since 25/10/21 8 CDNTs in Midlands in place since 29/11/21

Please note also a useful weblink for information on HSE Staff levels and S38 Staff levels, Monthly reports are available here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/our-workforce/workforce-reporting/social-care.html>

Yours sincerely,

*Bernard O'Regan*

**Bernard O'Regan**  
**Head of Operations - Disability Services,**  
**Community Operations**

## Appendix 1

Table 1: 85 Additional posts for the Childrens' Disability Network Teams:

CHO	Lead Agency	Discipline	Grade	WTE	Total
1	HSE	SLT	Senior	1	1
2	BOC	Psychologist	Staff	0.8	
2	BOC	SLT	Senior	1	
2	BOC	OT	Senior	1	
2	BOC	Physiotherapist	Senior	0.8	
2	BOC	SW	Staff	0.4	
2	HSE	Admin	Ill	0.4	4.4
4	Cope	Psychologist	Staff	1	
4	Cope	Physiotherapy	Senior	0.5	
4	Cope	OT	Staff	0.5	
4	Enable	Psychologist	Staff	1	
4	Enable	SLT	Staff	1	
4	Enable	Psychologist	Staff	0.8	
4	BOC	Psychologist	Staff	1	5.8
5	HSE	SLT	Staff	0.8	
5	HSE	SLT	Staff	0.3	
5	HSE	Physiotherapy	Senior	0.8	
5	HSE	SLT	Staff	0.9	
5	HSE	Dietitian	Senior	0.5	
5	HSE	OT	Senior	1	4.3
6	HSE	SW	Team Leader	0.8	
6	HSE	Psychologist	Senior	0.7	
6	HSE	Physiotherapy	Senior	0.8	
6	HSE	SLT	Senior	0.8	
6	HSE	OT	Senior	0.7	
6	Enable	OT	Senior	0.8	
6	Enable	OT	Basic	0.6	
6	Enable	Psychologist	Senior	0.3	
6	Enable	Physiotherapy	Senior	1	
6	Enable	Physiotherapy	Basic	1	
6	Enable	Therapy Assistant (PT)		0.5	
6	Enable	SLT	Senior	0.2	
6	Enable	SLT	Basic	0.5	
6	Enable	SW	Basic	0.5	
6	Enable	Psychologist	Senior	1	
6	Enable	Psychologist	Basic	1	
6	Enable	SLT	Senior	0.92	
6	Enable	SLT	Basic	0.92	
6	Enable	SW	Team Leader	1	
6	Enable	SW	Basic	0.5	
6	Enable	OT	Senior	1	

6	Enable	Physiotherapy	Senior	1	
6	Enable	SLT	Senior	1	
6	Enable	SLT	Senior	0.65	
6	Enable	Behav Specialist	CNS	1	
6	Enable	Behav Specialist	CNS	0.6	
6	Enable	OT	Senior	0.66	
6	Enable	OT	Senior	0.4	
6	Enable	OT	Basic	0.8	
6	Enable	Psychologist	TBA	0.4	
6	Enable	Psychologist	Senior	0.5	
6	Enable	Psychologist	Senior	0.57	
6	Enable	Physiotherapy	Senior	0.8	
6	Enable	SLT	Basic	0.7	
6	Enable	Physiotherapy	Senior	1	25.62
7	CRC	OT	Staff Grade	1	
7	CRC	Physio	Senior	1	
7	Stewarts Care	OT	Staff Grade	1	
7	Stewarts Care	Physio	Senior	1	
7	Stewarts Care	SW	Senior	1	
7	Stewarts Care	Psychologist	Senior	1	
7	Stewarts Care	Psychologist	Staff Grade	1	
7	HSE	OT	Senior	1	
7	HSE	OT	Staff Grade	1	
7	HSE	SW	Senior	1	
7	HSE	Psychologist	Staff Grade	1	
7	HSE	Psychologist	Staff Grade	1	
7	HSE	SLT	Senior	1	
7	HSE	SLT	Staff Grade	1	
7	HSE	Physio Therapy	Staff Grade Therapy	1	
7	HSE	Assistant	Assistant	1	16
8	HSE	SLT	Staff Grade	0.6	
8	Enable	SLT	Staff Grade	0.95	
8	HSE	Dietitian	Staff Grade	1	
8	HSE	Physiotherapist	Staff Grade	0.1	2.65
9	CRC	Physio	Senior	1	
9	CRC	OT	Senior	1	
9	CRC	SLT	Senior	1	
9	CRC	SW	Senior	0.5	
9	CRC	SW	Senior	0.14	
9	CRC	OT	Senior	1	
9	CRC	SLT	Senior	1	
9	CRC	Physio	Staff	1	
9	CRC	Dietitian	Senior	0.5	
9	CRC	Dietitian	Senior	0.5	
9	CRC	Family Support Worker		1	

9	CRC	Physio	Senior	0.11	
9	DOC	Nurse	CNS	1	
9	DOC	OT	Senior	1	
9	DOC	Psychologist	Senior	0.5	
9	DOC	SLT	Senior	0.5	
9	DOC	OT	Staff	0.5	
9	DOC	SW	Staff	1	
9	DOC	Physio	Senior	1	
9	DOC	OT	Senior	1	
9	DOC	OT	Staff	1	
9	DOC	SW	Staff	1	
9	SMH	OT	Staff	1	
9	SMH	Psychologist	Staff	1	
9	SMH	SW	Team Leader	1	
9	SMH	OT	Staff	1	
9	SMH	OT	Staff	1	
9	SMH	Physio	Senior	1	
9	SMH	SW	Staff	1	
9	SMH	SW	Team Leader	0.3	
9	SMH	Physio	Senior	1	
9	SMH	Psychologist	Senior	0.3	
9	SMH	Physio	Senior	1	
9	SMH	SW	Staff	0.3	
9	SMH	SW	Team Leader	0.5	27.65