



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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12<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill,  
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Dublin 2.  
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Dear Deputy Carroll MacNeill,

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: 60794/22**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of HSE funded therapists that have been allocated to special schools to date in 2022; the further measures and investment that is being made in disability services in general; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

In 2021 the Government allocated 85 whole time equivalent (WTE) posts to the Childrens' Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) to facilitate the restoration of pre-existing on-site health and social care supports in a number of special schools.

Following extensive engagement during summer 2022, a further 136.3 WTEs were allocated. These allocations are targeted towards restoring pre-existing on-site health and social care supports in 98 special schools and providing on-site supports in six newly established special schools.

It was agreed that the HSE would reassign the equivalent of 44 WTE posts from CDNTs to provide on-site supports in these special schools from September 2022 while recruitment of senior clinicians was progressed in parallel.

Unfortunately, the September reassignments were delayed due to industrial relations issues. These issues have now been resolved and the HSE is committed to assigning the necessary resource as quickly as possible. In parallel, the HSE continues to explore a range of options to enhance the recruitment and retention of essential staff across all aspects of the health services.

The HSE Community Operations Disability Services is working collaboratively with the CDNT lead agencies at CHO level to promote CDNTs as a workplace of choice in a competitive employment market. Each lead agency is responsible for recruitment of staff on their CDNTs and is using a variety of approaches to fill funded vacancies.

Options to support the recruitment of staff for the CDNTs currently being explored include:

- Targeted National Recruitment for CDNTs
- Targeted International Recruitment for CDNTs with an agreed relocation allowance
- Sponsorship Programme for therapy grades
- Apprentice Programme for therapy grades
- Employment of graduates as therapy assistants as they await CORU registration



- Expansion of therapy assistants in the system with HSE supporting individuals to return to education to quality as therapists.

The HSE is operating in a very competitive global market for healthcare talent as there are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals across the globe.

International Recruitment campaigns have been launched for qualified healthcare professionals. To support these international campaigns, the HSE is working in partnership with CORU, the regulator, and government departments to maximise this pool.

Within the CHO areas, while recruitment is managed locally for all vacant posts, International Recruitment campaigns have been launched for qualified healthcare professionals. To support these international campaigns, the HSE is working in partnership with CORU, the regulator, and government departments to maximise this pool.

Some CHO Areas report that staff from outside the European Union have been successful at interview recently, however, there is a lengthy body of work still to be undertaken to progress recruitment. The pre-clearance stage to appointment time frame can take a number of weeks and is heavily dependent on a number of factors including - the candidate returning documentation in a timely manner, the requirement in some cases for overseas clearances or visas, return of references and notice period to be worked. Pre-clearances can take a minimum of 2 weeks (if all documentation is submitted as requested), however it can take significantly longer if provision of the aforementioned documentation is delayed. It should also be noted that some candidates may be available for an immediate start with other candidates having to provide notice to a current employer. This can significantly impact the time to hire timeframes.

Some further points to note in relation to recruitment of CDNT staff include the following:

- There are panels in place for occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists.
- National Disability Operations have requested that CHO Areas undertake exit interviews to establish the reasons why staff are exiting services.
- National Disability Operations is currently reviewing the area of Assistant Grades.
- A comprehensive PDS national team development programme has been provided for CDNTs and cascaded to all team members. This programme, which was designed to support the establishment of the new CDNTs and to support the implementation of the new model of service, will also support staff retention.

**Measures and investment in Disability services.**

In 2022, Disability Services has been allocated c. €2.3 billion to provide a range of services throughout the country and is spent in line with nationally agreed policy for disability services, whilst at the same time endeavouring to maximise value. Services include Residential and Respite Services, Day Services, PA and Home Support Services, and Therapeutic Supports.

The HSE acknowledges that demographic challenges associated with the increase in the number of people living with a disability, the increase in age and life expectancy and the changing needs of people with a disability have all led to the need for increased residential facilities. In this regard, the HSE continues to work with agencies to explore various ways of responding to this need in line with the budget available.

New measures, funding allocated, and target deliverables for 2022 are outlined in the table below. Work is on-going to reach targets in each of these areas.

| New Measures 2022                          | Description  | 2022 Funding<br>€million | Target deliverable |
|--|--|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Progressing Disability Services (Children) | Multi-disciplinary, administration and specialised posts for CDNTs | 8.2                      | 190 posts          |



|  |  |       |               |
|--|--|-------|---------------|
| School leavers / Day Services  | An additional 1,700 day service places for school leavers and graduates of rehabilitative training   | 14.4  | 1,700         |
| Decongregation   | Provide 143 people with a disability living in congregated settings with more person-centred homes in the community  | 5.0   | 143           |
| Additional Respite Houses  | Establish three additional specialist centre-based services to provide 4,032 nights to 90 children, one to be Prader-Willi appropriate and the other two to provide high-support respite for children and young adults with complex support needs, in addition to seven further respite services which will provide 9,408 nights to 245 children and adults in a full year           | 7.7   | 10 houses     |
| Respite Packages   | Provide 53 additional intensive respite support packages to children and young adults.   | 1.3   | 53.0          |
| Alternative Placements from Nursing Homes (63)                       | Support 63 people with disabilities (<65yrs) inappropriately placed in nursing homes to transition to more appropriate placements in the community   | 5.5   | 63            |
| Residential Placements: Priority Support                             | Provide a range of residential supports creating 106 additional places in response to current and demographic need through investment in 50 places responding to priority needs, 36 planned residential places, 10 supported living places and 10 intensive home support packages to support transitions and discharges from acute services and the National Rehabilitation Hospital | 13.05 | 50            |
| Residential Places : Planned   |  |       | 36            |
| Residential Places: Supported Living                                 |  |       | 10            |
| Residential Places: Intensive Support                                |  |       | 10            |
| Residential Pilot  |  |       |               |
| Residential Placements: Tusla Under 18s                              | 12 residential packages to support young adults ageing out of Tusla services   | 3.0   | 12            |
| Personal Assistance Hours  |  | 3.1   | 120,000 hours |
| Home Support Services  |  | 0.8   | 30,000 hours  |
| Capacity Building model (2 year project)                             |  | 0.3   |               |
| Sensory Initiatives  |  | 1.0   |               |
| Digital Health Initiative 1.3m (reducing residential to accommodate) |  | 1.3   |               |

Yours Sincerely,

*Bernard O'Regan*

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

