



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

Deputy John McGuinness,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [john.mcguinness@oireachtas.ie](mailto:john.mcguinness@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy McGuinness,

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: 61367/22**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of therapists that will be recruited for disability services in 2023; and if he will make a statement on the matter*

**HSE Response**

Disability Service provision includes 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. Therapists are employed across all areas in Disability Services.

The majority of disability service provision in Ireland has historically and continues to be provided by voluntary agencies which provide services to people with disabilities. These agencies are funded under Section 38 and Section 39 of the Health Act 2004. The HSE works in partnership with these agencies to ensure the best level of service possible is provided to people with a disability, and their families, within the resources available.

In Children's Disability Services, resources are assigned to the Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs). 91 CDNTs are aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country and are providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age.

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.

Since 2019, more than 610 development posts have been allocated to children's disability services across the country. These posts have been assigned to teams based on a number of factors, including the existing ratio of staff to the number of children with disabilities in each area. This figure includes the 190 posts provided in 2022 as well as the recently agreed funding for an additional 136.3



WTEs at a cost of €11.48m to restore pre-existing services in 104 special schools.

The additional posts provided for under the National Service Plans for 2021 and 2022 are intended to support the newly established CDNTs to prioritise intervention for children with complex needs

## **Recruitment and Retention**

Most of the disciplines working in disability services including the CDNTs are similar to those working in other areas of the health services including Primary Care Services, Mental Health Services, Older Person Services and Acute Hospitals. The HSE and the various Lead Agencies experience ongoing challenges recruiting staff across a range of disciplines and grades.

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.

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. In addition, 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.

The lead agencies and the number of teams they lead are: HSE (41 teams), Enable Ireland (20 teams), Avista (formerly Daughters of Charity - 4 teams) Brothers of Charity (6 teams), Central Remedial Clinic (5 teams), St. Michael's House (4 teams), Cope Foundation (3 teams), St. Gabriel's (2 teams), St. Josephs Foundation (2 teams), Stewarts Care (2 teams), with CoAction West Cork and KARE leading 1 team each. Each lead agency is responsible for recruitment of staff on their CDNTs and is using a variety of approaches to fill funded vacancies. Each agency has on-going rolling recruitment to address a range of vacancies including short term temporary posts, full time permanent posts, development posts, part time posts etc. CDNTs and Lead Agencies report on the number of vacancies rather than the number of staff appointed.

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 qualify as therapists.

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

- There are panels in place for occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, and speech and language therapists.
- National Disability Operations is currently reviewing the area of Assistant Grades.
- A comprehensive Team Development Programme 2020/2021 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 the implementation of the new model of service, will also support staff retention. All resources from this Programme are available online for CDNTs
- An extensive CDNT Training and Development Programme 2022/2023 has been launched. This is supported with dedicated funding and based on the current competency gaps identified and prioritised by the National CDNT Forum. The HSE and Lead Agencies are



committed to providing ongoing training and development supports for CDNT staff supporting their professional development and retention.

A secure site for CDNMs and their staff has been set up on Basecamp to facilitate sharing of training and development resources as well as clinical and service resources.

Information pertaining to staffing levels, including therapists in Disability Services, are generated by the HSE Strategic Workforce Planning & Intelligence Unit.

Further information can be obtained at the following weblink:

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

It is important to note that the reports available at this website refer to staff numbers in the HSE and in S38 organisations and do not include staff employed in S39 organisations.

As the National Service Plan for 2023 has not yet been published, information is not yet available regarding the allocation of posts including therapy posts in Disability Services going forward.

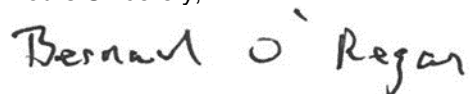
### **Workforce Planning**

Workforce planning is a broad term that encompasses a range of approaches and activities within and across organisations to ensure that the workforce has the right capacity, capability, values and behaviours to deliver high quality health and social care to the population they serve.

Workforce Planning is a key priority for the Irish Health Service. The Health Services People Strategy (2019-2024) guides the teams work to “Engage, develop and value our workforce to deliver the best possible care and services to the people who depend on them”.

Disability Operations are in the process of developing a workforce plan for Children’s Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) in collaboration with our colleagues in HR and clinical programmes. The plan is currently in draft, it is intended that the work would be complete in Q1 2023. This work, while focused on CDNTs, will provide valuable information that will be utilised and inform workforce planning in other disability services.

Yours Sincerely,



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

