



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

Office of the Head of Operations,
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18th July 2022

Deputy Emer Higgins,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: emer.higgins@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Higgins,

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: 34862/22

To ask the Minister for Health the way that his Department is supporting children with speech and language communication needs in the classroom; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Most children requiring interventions, including Speech and language therapy, would access services through their local Primary Care Services in the Community Health Care Areas (CHOs). Speech and language therapists routinely work with teachers in the educational environment.

Children with more complex speech and language needs access services through the Childrens Disability Network teams (CDNTs).

Childrens Disability Network teams (CDNTs).

In 2021, the remainder of ninety-one multidisciplinary CDNTs were established to provide services and supports for all children with complex needs within a defined geographic area.

Regardless of the nature of their disability, where they live, or the school they attend, every child with complex needs and their families have access to the full range of family centred services and supports of their 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 are provided as is feasible in the child's natural environments - their home, school and community. All CDNTs will provide supports for children with complex needs regardless of their diagnosis, where they live or where they go to school.

Work is ongoing on mapping specialised services and supports, and paediatric supports available and gap analysis for children with highly complex needs, in order to develop standardised approaches to integrated pathways of support for CDNTs and Primary Care staff.



The Children's Disability Network Teams' (CDNT) model of service is child and family centred where the team work together with the family to identify the important issues from the family's perspective to be addressed, agree a plan to address those issues and how the team will support the family on their prioritised goals, implement the plan and monitor the outcomes. This Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) is a 'live' process in that the team and family keep it under review whilst service supports and strategies are being implemented and as the child and family's needs and achievements change. School based supports will be provided where appropriate i.e. where families have prioritised a school based goal(s) in their child's IFSP.

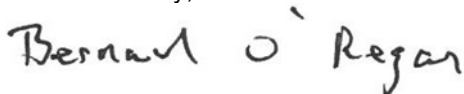
It is estimated that there are approximately 50,000 children with complex disability needs in the Republic of Ireland. A small proportion of these children attend special schools.

85 posts approved in mid-2021 were allocated to support services in thirty three special schools that had on-site therapy services prior to the establishment of CDNTs in 2021. Less than 2,500 children were enrolled in these special schools.

The staff recruited to these posts report to the Children's Disability Network Manager and are part of the local CDNT. The posts include occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, social workers and speech & language therapists. Children attending the thirty three special schools in question receive their services in the school or in other settings as appropriate. While on-site services will be provided in the schools as appropriate, CDNT staff are not based in special schools.

If speech and language communication aids are required for children to support communication at home, these would be funded through the local RAG (Resource Allocation Group for Aids & Appliances in the local Community Health Care area (CHO). If required for school / education purposes, the request is made via the Education services.

Yours sincerely,



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

