



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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Dear Deputy Tully,

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: 36728/22**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent staffing posts that will be provided to Children's Disability Services in 2022; the additional resources that will be provided to CDNTs to address the backlog of assessment of need and those assessment of need which were carried out incorrectly; the additional therapeutic supports that will be provided to CDNTs; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

### **HSE Response**

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.

Since 2019, more than 475 development posts have been allocated to children's disability services across the country. 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.

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

A Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT) Staff Census and Workforce Review was undertaken in October 2021 and a final report has been issued to the Department of Health and relevant stakeholders. This report has provided valuable information on the number of staff working in the CDNTs by discipline and grade and staff vacancies at a point in time. Vacancies continue to be tracked monthly.

The information from the Census report is supporting targeted workforce planning by the HSE in consultation with the CDNT Lead Agencies to reinforce the skill mix of their teams to accommodate local population need.



With regard to the 2022 development posts for the CDNTs, the first tranche of posts were allocated as follows:

<b>CHO</b>	<b>Allocation</b>	<b>FYC</b>
<b>1</b>	11	€803,000
<b>2</b>	5	€365,000
<b>3</b>	4	€292,000
<b>4</b>	14.5	€1,058,500
<b>5</b>	26	€1,898,000
<b>6</b>	4	€292,000
<b>7</b>	24.5	€1,788,500
<b>8</b>	23.5	€1,715,500
<b>9</b>	17.5	€1,277,500
<b>OCCF</b>	4.5	€328,500
<b>Deaf Services Specialist Services</b>	5	€365,000
	9	€657,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>148.5</b>	<b>€10,840,500</b>

The HSE is currently finalising the allocation of the remaining 41.5 posts

Most of the disciplines working in 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 experiences ongoing challenges recruiting staff across a range of disciplines and grades.

Options regarding the recruitment of staff, including psychologists, for the CDNTs being explored in the first instance include:

- Targeted National Recruitment for CDNTs
- Targeted International Recruitment for CDNTs with the possibility of a relocation allowance
- Sponsorship Programme
- 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.

The Community Operations, Disability Services is actively developing business propositions for approval by HSE National Human Resource Services.

There is an acknowledgement Nationally that there are challenges with the supply of therapists and this has required the following disciplines of staff to be placed on the Critical Skills Occupations List.

- Psychologist
- Dietician
- Physiotherapist
- Occupational Therapist
- Speech and Language Therapist

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 is working collaboratively with the CDNT Lead Agencies at CHO level to market CDNTs as an employer 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.



## Assessment of Need

Further to the High Court judgement in the case of CTM & JA v HSE there is a requirement to provide diagnostic assessments where appropriate as part of the Assessment of Need process. The HSE will utilise a range of approaches to address the requirement to provide additional assessments for children who received a Preliminary Team Assessment. This will include supporting CDNTs to provide additional assessments and also procuring additional assessments as part of a waiting list initiative.

The HSE's National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPD) was established in March 2022. The Clinical Programme has led the process of developing Interim Clinical Guidance to replace the element of the Standard Operating Procedure which was found to be non-compliant with the Disability Act (2005) – the Preliminary Team Assessment. This process was undertaken through the Disability Advisory Group (DAG) of the Clinical Programme. This advisory group is chaired by a person with lived experience of disability and also has three other lived experience service users, along with the Confidential Recipient. Other (DAG) representation includes, The Wheel, National Disability Services Association, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Inclusion Ireland, and the Disability Federation of Ireland. The DAG also has representation from the professions providing the majority of services to people with disability: Dietetics, Medicine, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Psychology, Social Care, Social Work, and Speech and Language Therapy. The DAG also comprises representatives from HSE's Operations and HSE Change Planning & Delivery.

Within the HSE, National Clinical Programmes have the responsibility to develop clinical guidance for practitioners to follow. To develop the Interim Clinical Guidance, 80 participants - which included Forsa, additional service users with lived experience, Legal Counsel, Assessment & Liaison Officers - and relevant professional bodies on the DAG, engaged in a day-long workshop, along with representatives from HSE's Operations and HSE Change Planning & Delivery; the CEO of the HSE and the Minister for Disability. The Clinical Programme presented a possible approach and received feedback both during the workshop and in a 10-day period following it. Feedback was incorporated into a new version of the Interim Clinical Guidance and this was then presented successively, to the DAG, the group of Disability Operations Leads for each Community Health Organisation (CHO) and to the Clinical Forum (the highest level clinical decision-making forum in the HSE). This new Interim Clinical Guidance has now been clinically approved and legal advice is awaited to confirm its compliance with the Disability Act (2005). The approach to assessment has to be designed in a manner which is clinically appropriate, prior to legal advice being sought.

The National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPD) has also committed to establishing a Task Group on Assessment of Need to address other issues related to the Assessment of Need process that are not addressed in the Interim Clinical Guidance. This group will include representatives from all the key stakeholders and particularly those with lived experience, and will meet monthly over the next 12 months.

Following legal advice on the Interim Clinical Guidance, Disability Operations, in collaboration with the Clinical Programme, will provide further information to service users and service providers, including a training webinar to support adoption of the Interim Clinical Guidance.

Yours sincerely



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

