



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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10th June 2022

Deputy David Cullinane,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: david.cullinane@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 28265/22

To ask the Minister for Health the number of vacant posts across Children's Disability Network Teams; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Ninety-one Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) have been established to provide services and supports for all children with complex needs within a defined geographic area.

CDNTs are teams of health and social care professionals (e.g., occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, social workers) and others disciplines (e.g., nursing). The reconfiguration into CDNTs and the resultant staffing mix was influenced by a number of factors including the staff resources of existing services and the expressions of interest process. Hence, some CDNTs may have other disciplines such as nurses, family support workers or early educators.

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.

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.

All CDNTs will provide supports for children with complex needs regardless of their diagnosis, where they live or where they go to school

A CDNT Staff Census and Workforce Review was undertaken in October 2021. The final report has been finalised and 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. This information will allow targeted workforce planning by the HSE in consultation with the Children's Disability Network Managers to reinforce the skill mix of their teams to accommodate local population need.

The total number of approved Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) for the 91 CDNTs is 1,892.38 WTE. Currently there are 1,367.88 filled WTE, of which 1,173.28 WTE are in therapy/clinical roles. There are 524.50 vacancies across the 91 teams, representing an average staff vacancy rate across the nine Community Healthcare Organisations Areas of 28%. This figure includes unfilled 2021 development posts as well as other vacancies arising from retirements, resignations, maternity leaves, etc. The ratio of therapy /clinical to administration / management filled WTE is 6:1.

The HSE will be working with Lead Agencies to implement a ratio of 5:1 therapy/clinical to administration / management between 2022 – 2023 to reduce the time spent by clinicians/ therapists on administrative duties thereby maximising the therapy hours available for direct service provision with children and their families.

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.

The HSE continues to explore a range of options to support the recruitment of essential staff across all aspects of the health services. In addition, the HSE works collaboratively with the CDNT Lead Agencies to progress recruitment initiatives for these teams. Each lead agency is responsible for recruitment of staff on their CDNTs and can use a variety of approaches to fill funded vacancies.

Yours sincerely



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