



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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22nd November 2022

Deputy Duncan Smith,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: duncan.smith@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Smith,

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: 55442/22

To ask the Minister for Health the full-year funding amount in the HSE service plan for progressing disability services for children and young people; the amount of this funding that has been spent to date; and the amount of this 2022 funding, including unspent funding, that will be transferred to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth under the transfer of functions.

HSE Response

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.

Over 60% of the resources available are allocated to provide a range of residential services to approximately 8,300 people with a disability for both children and adults. A further 20% is targeted at the provision of over 18,000 day places, for persons over 18 years of age and supports to nearly 25,000 people. The remaining 20% provides respite care services to just over 5,700 adults and children; almost 5 million for personal assistant and home support hours, as well as multi-disciplinary teams and other community services and supports.

Disability services are delivered through a mix of HSE direct provision as well as through non-statutory service providers, and private providers.

Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme (PDS)

The HSE is committed to the full implementation of the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme (PDS). PDS is a significant change programme for the provision of services and supports for children from birth to 18 years of age, in line with Sláintecare and the Programme for Government.



The National Service Plan 2022 provided €8.2 million for PDS in 2022. This was for the targeted provision of 190 multi-disciplinary, administration and specialised posts for the Childrens Disability Network Teams.

Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs)

In line with the PDS model, resources assigned to children's disability services are allocated 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.

These additional posts are intended to support the newly established CDNTs to prioritise intervention for children with complex needs in special schools.

Arrangements are underway for the transfer of functions to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth. The provision and accountability for the delivery of services to people with disabilities will remain unchanged during this transfer. The funding allocated in 2022 for the provision of staff for the CDNTs is committed and the HSE continues to strive to reach the allocated targets for the funding.

Recruitment and Retention

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 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. 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
- Apprenticeship 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.

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



- There are panels in place for occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists and speech & language therapists. These panels will be expanded further in November 2022.
- Community Operations Disability Services have requested that CHO Areas undertake exit interviews to establish the reasons why staff are exiting services.
- Community Operations Disability Services is currently reviewing the area of Assistant Grades.
- A comprehensive PDS national team development programme has been provided for CDNMs 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.

Yours Sincerely,

Bernard O'Regan

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

