



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

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21st October 2022

Deputy Mattie McGrath,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: mattie.mcgrath@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy McGrath,

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: 50552/22

“To ask the Minister for Health the number of senior occupational therapists who are working with the children’s disability network team; the number of days that they are employed; the number of children that attended this service; the number waiting to be seen by the occupational therapist; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

HSE Response

In 2021, the remainder of ninety-one multidisciplinary CDNTs were established in 96 Network areas 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.

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.

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.

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.

In addition, further to recent discussions with An Taoiseach and relevant Government Ministers, the HSE and its CDNT Lead Agencies will receive funding for an additional 136.3 WTEs to provide services in 104 special schools.



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

With regard to the number of senior occupational therapists who are working with the children's disability network team, the table below is a summary by discipline taken from the attached National CDNT Census and Workforce Review October 2021.

The Occupational Therapist grade of discipline is highlighted. It is not broken down further into Senior and Staff OT grades, however, overall as per the CDNT census, senior grades across all disciplines account for 783.39 approved WTEs.

Discipline	Approved WTE	Filled WTE	Vacant WTE	% Filled	% Vacant
Speech and Language Therapist	406.65	289.41	117.24	71%	29%
Occupational Therapist	371.04	248.97	122.06	67%	33%
Psychologist	294.54	199.62	94.92	68%	32%
Physiotherapist	236.59	161.59	75.00	68%	32%
Social Worker	159.97	117.76	42.21	74%	26%
Administration	129.13	111.90	17.23	87%	13%
Nursing	102.44	85.41	17.03	83%	17%
CDNM	89.00	82.70	6.30	93%	7%
Family Support Worker	23.79	17.96	5.83	75%	25%
Dietician	21.10	6.80	14.30	32%	68%
Socialcare Worker	20.76	16.34	4.42	79%	21%
Care Assistant	18.24	13.49	4.75	74%	26%
Play Therapist	9.56	8.36	1.20	87%	13%
Other	5.70	5.70	-	100%	-%
Healthcare Assistant	2.58	0.58	2.00	22%	78%
Early Intervention Educator	1.00	1.00	-	100%	-%
Paediatric Link worker	0.30	0.30	-	100%	-%
Total	1,892.38	1,367.88	524.50	72%	28%

With regard to the number of children that attended this service and the number waiting to be seen by the occupational therapist, the Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) do not collect activity or waiting list data by individual discipline as this does not align with the interdisciplinary model of care. Discipline-specific data is not available in Disability Services.

As outlined above, there were 248.97 whole time equivalent occupational therapists working in CDNTs in October 2021. This figure indicates that the equivalent of 248.97 therapists working a full time 37 hours per week were available to the teams. The census does not provide data on the number of individual therapists making up this number.

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 CDNT Staff Census and Workforce Review undertaken in 2021 has provided valuable information on the number of staff working in the CDNTs by discipline and grade.



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
- 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.

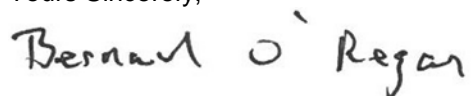
In addition, there are panels in place for occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists. These panels will be expanded further in November 2022.

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.

National Information Management System for the CDNTs (CDNTIMS)

Historically the number of children waitlisted for children's disability services provided by section 38 and section 39 providers has not been available nationally. The establishment of CDNTs will facilitate the collection of this data. A National Management Information System for all 91 CDNTs is in development and when implemented, will provide current data on waiting lists and other details for all CDNTs.

Yours Sincerely,



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

