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Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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14th November 2022

Deputy Pauline Tully,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: pauline.tully@oireachtas.ie

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: 53638/22

To ask the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 145 of 12 July 2022, the number of psychologists, dietitians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists who have been recruited from outside the European Union since these disciplines were placed on the critical skills occupations list, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Since 2019, more than 475 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.

In addition, further to recent agreement with Government, 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 are intended to support the newly established CDNTs to prioritise intervention for children with complex needs in special schools.

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 detailed information available following this review is allowing targeted workforce planning by the HSE in consultation with lead agencies and the Children's Disability Network Managers to reinforce the skill mix of their teams so that we accommodate local population needs.

Each CDNT is managed by a lead agency. These agencies include the HSE, S38 organisations and S39 organisations.

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.



We are 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.

Within the CHO areas, recruitment is managed locally for all vacant posts. Information is not collated centrally regarding how the posts have been recruited i.e. domestic / international or by agency.


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 CHO Areas report that staff from outside the European Union have been successful at interview recently, however, there is a lengthy body of work still to be undertaken to progress recruitment. The pre-clearance stage to appointment time frame can take a number of weeks and is heavily dependent on a number of factors including - the candidate returning documentation in a timely manner, the requirement in some cases for overseas clearances or visas, return of references and notice period to be worked. Pre-clearances can take a minimum of 2 weeks (if all documentation is submitted as requested), however it can take significantly longer if provision of the aforementioned documentation is delayed. It should also be noted that some candidates may be available for an immediate start with other candidates having to provide notice to a current employer. This can significantly impact the time to hire timeframes.

Other options to support the recruitment of staff for the CDNTs include:

- There are panels in place for occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists. These panels will be expanded further in November 2022.
- Targeted National Recruitment for CDNTs
- 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.

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.



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

