



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

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 46355/22**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of vacant posts in children's disability network teams, by post and team in tabular form.*

**HSE Response**

The HSE acknowledges the challenges in meeting the demand for children's disability services and is acutely conscious of how this impacts on children and their families.

All 91 Children's Disability Network Teams are now in place. These teams provide services and supports for all children with complex needs within a defined geographic area.

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 including autism, in order to develop standardised approaches to integrated pathways of support for CDNTs and Primary Care staff.

190 posts were allocated to Children's Disability Services this year. 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 with the 185 posts allocated in 2021 are intended to support the newly established CDNTs to prioritise intervention for children with complex needs as well as those in special schools.



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).

Each CDNT is managed by a Lead Agency. Each lead agency is responsible for recruiting staff when vacancies arise on their teams or when development posts are allocated to their teams.

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.

A CDNT Staff Census and Workforce Review was undertaken in 2021. The 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.

Please see the attached CDNT Census Report 2021. This gives more detailed information regarding the numbers of staff working in Childrens Disability services. The overall vacancy rate at the time of this staff census was 28%.

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.

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.

Options regarding the recruitment of staff including speech and language therapists and occupational therapists for the CDNTs being explored include:

- Targeted National Recruitment for CDNTs
- High profile international campaigns for therapy roles.
- 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 HSE has approved an attractive and competitive relocation package for the international recruitment of all disciplines. The relocation packages include allowances payable to candidates to meet the initial cost for relocating, such as an accommodation and flight allowance for EU/UK candidates and non EU candidates.

Yours sincerely



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

