



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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21st February 2023

Deputy Niamh Smyth,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: niamh.smyth@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Smyth,

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 6399/23

To ask the Minister for Health the strategies being examined to fill the vacancies to support the workload of the staff of an organisation (details supplied) and speed up waiting lists.

Details Supplied: Enable Ireland

HSE Response

Recruitment and Retention

There are ongoing challenges recruiting staff across a range of disciplines and grades in all areas of the health services including Primary Care Services, Mental Health Services, Older Person Services, Acute Hospitals and Disability services.

Children's Services

In relation to Children's Services in particular, the HSE and Lead Agencies are operating in a very competitive global market for healthcare talent as there are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals across the globe.

In partnership with our Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) Lead Agencies, we continue to explore a range of options to enhance the recruitment and retention of essential staff into our CDNTs. In addition, the HSE Community Operations Disability Services is working collaboratively with our partnering Lead Agencies to promote CDNTs as a workplace of choice in a competitive employment market.

The lead agencies and the number of teams they lead are: HSE (41 teams), Enable Ireland (20 teams), Avista (formerly Daughters of Charity - 4 teams) Brothers of Charity (6 teams), Central Remedial Clinic (5 teams), St. Michael's House (4 teams), Cope Foundation (3 teams), St. Gabriel's (2 teams), St. Josephs Foundation (2 teams), Stewarts Care (2 teams), with CoAction West Cork and KARE leading 1 team each. Each lead agency, including Enable Ireland, is responsible for recruitment of staff on their CDNTs and is using a variety of approaches to fill funded vacancies. Each agency has on-going rolling recruitment to address a range of vacancies including short term temporary posts, full time permanent posts, development posts, part time posts etc.



Options to support the recruitment of staff for the CDNTs currently being progressed include:

- Targeted National Recruitment for CDNTs
- Targeted International Recruitment for CDNTs with an agreed relocation allowance
- Sponsorship Programme for therapy grades

In addition, the following options are being explored:

- 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 launched International Recruitment campaigns 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. In addition, some of the CDNT Lead Agencies are also progressing International Recruitment.

Some CHO Areas report that staff from outside the European Union have been successful at interview recently. However, 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 will impact the time to hire.

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

- There are panels in place for occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, and speech and language therapists.
- National Disability Operations is currently reviewing the area of Assistant Therapy Grades.

Filling the current staffing vacancies will take time. In the interim, the HSE continues to drive a number of initiatives to reduce waiting times for children and families. These include sourcing therapy assessments and interventions externally via private service providers.

Another key focus of HSE Disabilities is staff retention. A comprehensive Team Development Programme 2020/2021 was provided for Children's Disability Network Managers (CDNMs) and cascaded to all team members. The programme, designed to support establishment of the new teams and implementation of a child and family centred model of services, will also support staff retention. All resources from this programme are now accessible online for CDNT staff. A further CDNT Training and Development Programme 2022/2023 has been launched, with dedicated funding and based on competency gaps identified and prioritised by the teams. A secure online site has been set up for CDNMs and their staff to facilitate sharing of training and development resources as well as clinical and service good practice models in place across the country. The HSE and partner Lead Agencies are committed to providing ongoing training and development for CDNT staff supporting their professional development and retention, and promoting CDNTs as an attractive place to work.

Adult Services

Services for adults with disabilities are provided either directly by the HSE or through a range of voluntary service providers. The majority of specialised disability provision (80%) is delivered through non-statutory sector service providers.


There are ongoing challenges recruiting staff across a range of disciplines and grades in all areas of the health services.

In 2023, we will be working with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to implement a series of actions to improve staff retention and recruitment performance and increase base staffing levels in line with funding received. In this regard, on January 20th, there was a joint in person workshop entitled, "Service



Continuity and Capacity - Recruitment and Retention” between the HSE and representatives from the voluntary service provider organisations. The aim of this session was to identify issues of concern in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff and to begin the process of exploring possible solutions for the short, medium and long term. This was an initial meeting to outline the main issues such as pay, terms and conditions, retention focus, international recruitment and additional college placements. There is scheduled to be a further online session in the near future to agree a set of actions and prioritise them into an action plan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard O'Regan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear 'O' and 'R'.

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