



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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4th September 2023

Deputy Sean Sherlock,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: sean.sherlock@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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: 35638/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of therapists assigned to each special school in the State; the number of posts vacant and filled; and the number of therapy hours in use as of July 2023, in tabular form.

HSE Response

In Children's Disability Services, resources are assigned 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 with complex disability needs, 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. CDNTs were established following a reconfiguration of existing resources in children's disability services. These teams were established to provide services based on each child's presenting needs rather than where they went to school.

Supports in Special Schools

Following discussions with An Taoiseach and Government Ministers in 2022, in relation to the priority requirement to re-instate the health and social care supports that were historically provided in some special schools in the State, and with due consideration of the balance of challenges and risks, it was agreed that funding would be provided for an additional 136 posts to progress this requirement.

It was agreed that the special school based services must be aligned with the existing Children's Disability Network Teams with the existing CDNTs, ensuring that

- the "whole of child" needs are met with integrated interventions, and where a Family Centred model of support is provided to ensure that children with complex disability needs receive supports to address their needs across home and school;
- this allocation builds on what has been delivered in the 2021 allocation of 87 posts to specific special schools with appropriate clinical governance and supervision;



- any potential risks associated with conflicting goals or therapeutic approaches are minimised;
- the risk of duplication of service interventions for children is reduced;

The HSE and the voluntary sector Service Providers who are Lead Agencies for some CDNTs have been working to implement this Government decision. While there are significant recruitment challenges which are impacting on fully implementing this decision, there has been progress in providing therapy supports, including:

- Speech and Language Therapy
- Psychology
- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Social Work

Special schools Posts Recruitment Status

With regard to recruitment of therapists for Special Schools, the table below provides the most recent updated, validated information available is for the end of June 2023 as follows:

Posts ALLOCATED			Posts filled to date			Balance: unfilled posts		
	2021	2022		2021	2022		2021	2022
CHO1	1.00	11.50	CHO1	1.00	1.00	CHO1	0.00	10.50
CHO2	4.40	8.00	CHO2	4.40	0.00	CHO2	0.00	8.00
CHO3	0	19.50	CHO3	0	10.60	CHO3	0.00	8.90
CHO4	5.8	25.90	CHO4	0	4.29	CHO4	5.80	21.61
CHO5	4.30	23.26	CHO5	0.80	7.80	CHO5	3.50	15.46
CHO6	25.62	10.30	CHO6	16.91	4.80	CHO6	8.71	5.50
CHO7	16	1.98	CHO7	10.4	0.00	CHO7	5.60	1.98
CHO8	2.65	24.10	CHO8	0.00	0.00	CHO8	2.65	24.10
CHO9	27.65	11.79	CHO9	24.65	5.50	CHO9	3.00	6.29
TOTAL			TOTAL					
ALLOCATED	87.42	136.33	FILLED	58.16	33.99		29.26	102.34

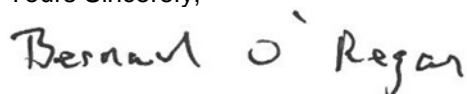
58.16 WTE of 87 posts (2021) recruited = 67%
 33.99 WTE of 136 posts (2022) recruited = 25%
Total recruited: 92.15 of 223.75 = 42%

With regard to therapy hours provided to Special Schools, from validated, updated information collated for June 2023, 2271.7 therapy hours were provided per week which equates to 65 WTEs.

The HSE and lead agencies will continue to enhance this service provision based on a range of measures to enhance recruitment of therapy staff, including international recruitment.

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 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.

Yours Sincerely,



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

