



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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2nd August 2023

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: 36248/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth further to Parliamentary Question No. 305 of 23 March 2023, if the process of developing a workforce plan for children's disability network teams has been completed; if so, the details of the plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

CDNTs are teams of health and social care professionals, including nursing, occupational therapy, psychology, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social work, dietetics and others. The team works closely together in a family centred model, focusing on the child's and family's own priorities.

In addition to the five most common health and social care professionals on CDNTs nationally i.e. occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech and language therapists and social workers, there are a varied range of other disciplines on the teams following reconfiguration of existing posts in disability service providers to CDNTs under PDS. The HSE is commissioning an independent review of the CDNT service model that will consider the competencies and skill mix required to inform CDNT composition.

The CDNTs are currently providing care and therapy for 46,000 children and strategies and supports for urgent cases on the waitlist where staffing resources.

Since 2019, more than 610 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. This figure includes 190 posts provided in 2022 as well as an additional 136.3 WTEs to restore pre-existing services in 104 special schools.

The HSE completed its second annual Children's Disability Network Team Staff Census and Workforce Review in October 2022. The resulting report was finalised in February 2023 and has been circulated to relevant stakeholders. There are 18 employers in total across the 91 CDNTs including the HSE and 17 Agencies.

An overall analysis of the data from 2021 and 2022 demonstrates an increase of 11% in the number of approved posts and a 2% increase in the CDNT workforce. This increase has been achieved in a context where there is an average turnover rate 9.6% in health and social care professionals each year.



The census indicates over 707 posts vacant out of 2102.62 3 at this time across all CDNTs. Disability services, similar to all other areas of the Irish health services are experiencing enormous challenges in recruiting Health and Social Care Professionals (HSCP) at this time.

The demand for CDNT service for children with complex needs arising from their disability has risen from a decade ago of 3.5% of total child population (45,000 children) to now a minimum of 5.6% (72,000). An example of increased demand is the number of new children referred to one CHO where CDNTs have been in place for a number of years has risen 21% in last 3 years.

An Independent CDNT Review will review the competencies and skill sets required for CDNTs which will assist defining additional staffing requirements.

In addition, commencing in October 2023, the HSE will undertake it's third Children's Disability Network Team Staff Census and Workforce Review Census 2023. This will provide further concise and validated information regarding staffing, vacancies and success of retention and recruitment initiatives being undertaken.

Projections

As outlined earlier, the CDNT Staff Census & Workforce Review 2022 demonstrated that the overall staffing on our teams nationally had increased by 2%. In addition, the service managed a turnover rate of 9.6% for Health and Social Care Professionals.

The target for recruitment of graduates in 2023 and 2024 is set out in table 1 below. This is based on the approximate number of new graduates in 2023 / 2024. Disability Operations will target 10% of graduates in 2023 but expect that workforce planning initiatives and marketing will increase the profile of CDNTs and have adjusted the target in 2024 to 20%.

Table 1

HSPC Graduates	Graduates	Targeted 2023	Targeted 2024	Total
Dietetics Total	69	7	14	21
Occupational Therapy Total	123	12	25	37
Physiotherapy Total	228	23	46	68
Psychology Total	75	8	15	23
Social Work Total	252	25	50	76
Speech and Language Therapy Total	119	12	24	36
	866	87	173	260

It is expected that international recruitment will yield 20 WTE by year-end 2023. A target of 91 will be explored in collaboration with HR and Service colleagues for year-end 2024.

In addition, our student sponsorship programme will target 91 individuals each year for four years.

In summary, the Recruitment Plan is 462 HSCP staff by Q4 2024.

There are other initiatives ongoing that are dependent on an increase in the number of graduate places on recognised courses. The HSE as part of their workforce planning initiatives are working to influence this space, and if successful, this could see an increase in the number of graduates available and an upward revision on 2024 figures.

The requirement for innovation in a regulated environment continues to be a challenge, however we are committed to working with all stakeholders, internal and external, to reimagine disability services and ensure that we close the gap between our allocated and filled WTE.



Workforce Planning

Workforce planning is a broad term that encompasses a range of approaches and activities within and across organisations to ensure that the workforce has the right capacity, capability, values and behaviours to deliver high quality health and social care to the population they serve.

Workforce Planning is a key priority for the Irish Health Service. The Health Services People Strategy (2019-2024) guides the teams work to “Engage, develop and value our workforce to deliver the best possible care and services to the people who depend on them”.

Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 - 2026

Further to discussions between Roderic O’Gorman, TD, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Anne Rabbitte, TD, Minister of State for Disabilities and Paul Reid, the then CEO of the Health Service Executive (HSE), it was agreed that an overarching roadmap would be developed to improve services for children with disabilities and their families. The PDS Roadmap, which contains 60 actions for the Health Service Executive (HSE) and its funded service providers, does the following:

- Clarifies the commitment of the HSE, supported by Government, to providing high quality, responsive supports and services for children with disabilities;
- Provides an accountability and reporting framework for the implementation and delivery of supports and services.

The document has been developed by the HSE in consultation with HSE funded Lead Agencies of CDNTs, Department of Health (formally), and the Department of Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and agreed by Minister Roderic O’Gorman and Minister of State for Disabilities, Anne Rabbitte.

The Roadmap will address improvements in the following key areas:

1. Integrated Services between Disabilities, Primary Care, CAMHS and Tusla
2. CDNT Service Access and Development, including the statutory Assessments of Need
3. Workforce
4. Communication and Engagement
5. Engagement with colleagues in Education and Support for Special schools

Workforce

Under Workforce, the Roadmap includes a number of critical retention and recruitment actions including:

- Recruitment of 462 of the above 700 unfilled posts by the end of 2023 and the balance of 240 posts in 2025
- 300 Therapy Assistant posts over 2023 (50 posts), 2024 (125 posts) and 2025 (125 posts)
- 360 new whole time equivalent (WTE) Health and Social Care Professional posts for CDNTs in 2025-2026
- 78 WTE posts in Primary Care CHNs to support children with disabilities and non complex needs more appropriately

The Roadmap was approved by the HSE Board on July 28th and will be launched shortly by DCEDIY.

Retention and Recruitment

The HSE and its funded agencies are operating in a very competitive global market for healthcare talent as there are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals across the globe.

Under the Roadmap, the HSE in partnership with our CDNT Lead Agencies is progressing a robust Retention and Recruitment campaign for CDNT staff including but not limited to ;

- A comprehensive Team Development Programme 2020/2021 was provided for CDNTs and CDNTs.



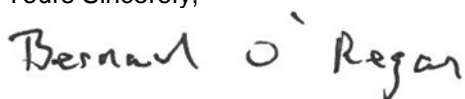
- Delivery of an extensive CDNT Training and Development Programme 2022/2023 will be completed by Q1 2024.
- The HSE and Lead Agencies are committed to providing ongoing training and development supports for CDNT staff supporting their professional development and retention.
- Establishment of the CDNFM Forum
- Confined Recruitment Campaign - Senior Therapy Grades for CDNTs
- Ongoing dialog with the staff representative bodies to troubleshoot the issues that are challenging for staff working in our CDNTs
- Culture and Engagement Sessions
- Stakeholder engagement session
- Marketing Disability Services - specifically CDNTs as an workplace of choice
- An advertising campaign with a fresh creative concept has been developed. This will be used as part of all future recruitment campaigns.
- Work is ongoing with colleagues in Corporate HR to establish a recruitment pathway for all vacancies in CDNTs regardless of employer i.e. HSE, Section 38 and Section 39 Service Providers.
- Engagement with Graduates by HR Social Care Team
- Career Hub
- Campaign to Target Irish candidates abroad
- Student Sponsorship Programmes commencing in Sept 2023
- Targeted Recruitment Campaign – Senior Therapy Grades for CDNTs
- Staff Grade Recruitment
- Student / Clinical Placements
- Employment of Therapy Assistant Grades
- Retirees: To address identified gaps on our CDNTs, the HSE is writing to all HSCPs who have retired over the past three years inviting them to return to the workplace, giving due cognisance to pension abatement rules.
- International Recruitment

National Working Groups in regards to Workforce Planning

In addition, there are a number of working groups which HSE Disability Operations and/or HR Social Care Team are contributing to:

- Cross Sectoral Employers Working Group for Social Workers
- DCEDIY - Supply Issues for Disability Grades – Stakeholder Group
 - DCEDIY – Sub Group for Social Care Workers
- ESRI - Workforce projections in Disability services
- Recruitment & Retention Forum HSE and Disability Umbrella Bodies

Yours Sincerely,



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

