



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

Office of the Head of Operations,
Disability Services/Social Care Division,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369
Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

21st March 2023

Deputy Martin Browne,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: martin.browne@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Browne,

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: 13338/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the measures he is taking to increase the number of dieticians in CDNT teams; the number of dieticians available to the 91 CDNT teams nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

91 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) are aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country and are providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age.

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

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.

Disability services are provided following individual assessment according to the child's individual requirements and support needs. Dieticians on the CDNTs work together with the multidisciplinary team to meet the individual child's requirements.



The 2022 Children's Disability Network Team Staff Census and Workforce Review National Report has been circulated.

Please see the attached report.

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

The 2022 report has identified that there are 27.5 whole time equivalent dietitian posts assigned to the CDNTs.

This is in comparison to the 2021 report which had 21.1 whole time equivalent dietitian posts assigned to the CDNTs.

Retention and Recruitment

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.

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 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 CDNTs 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.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard O'Regan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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

