



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>

6th April 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 questions, which were submitted to this department for response.

PQ: 14470/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if a clinical governance framework has been developed and implemented nationally within the 91 children's disability network teams; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 14471/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if a comprehensive workforce plan has been developed in regard to the training, recruitment and retention of staff within children's disability network teams; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 14473/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of therapists within children's disability network teams who are of a senior grade that enables them to oversee students on placement; the grade level required to oversee students on placement within CDNTs; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 14474/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the average timeframe for the replacement of each staff post (details supplied) within children's disability network teams, from the staff member handing in their notice until the new staff member has started in the role; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Details supplied: The Psychological Society of Ireland, The Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists, The Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland.



PQ: 14476/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 1770 and 1771 of 14 June 2022, the number of the 85 posts allocated to support services in thirty-three special schools that had on-site therapy services prior to the establishment of CDNTs in 2021 that have been filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 14478/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if national policies and structures are in place for the 91 children's disability network teams; and if he will make a statement on the matter

PQ: 14479/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the total number of IT support staff working in children's disability network teams; if he is satisfied that this is sufficient; 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.

The attached Community Healthcare Area (CHO) Governance of Children's Disability Network Services has been circulated to all the CHOs and CDNTs. Each CDN, comprising one Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT), operates within the legislative context for health services in Ireland and follows the direction of national strategy and policy.

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

With regard to Senior Grade Therapists on the CDNTs, the largest allocated grade is at Senior level where there are 616.37 filled WTE and 331.43 vacant WTE positions (947.80 total)

Under the judgement and direction of the Children's Team Network Manager, students on placement within CDNTs are overseen by staff, regardless of grade, who are competent to take students based on multiple factors including staff knowledge, experience, training, performance, and supervisor input.



For example, a staff grade of 3-5 years working on CDNTs would have these competencies and skills and be supported by their senior.

The Children's Disability Network Team Information Management System (CDNTIMS)

A National Management Information System for all 91 CDNTs is in development. Rollout of CDNTIMS to all 91 CDNTs is taking place on a phased basis from Q1 2023 to Q4 2023.

With regard to IT, CDNTIMS and its associated environments are supported by the resources of the HSE's eHealth and Disruptive Technologies National Service Desk in addition to eHealth and Disruptive Technologies Community ICT department, the National Disability Operations Team and a bespoke support platform provided by the contracted software vendor.

Retention and Recruitment

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.

These additional posts are intended to support the newly established CDNTs to prioritise intervention for children with complex needs in special schools.

Further to the Government decision to restore on-site services in special schools, the HSE agreed to assign the equivalent 44 WTE from existing CDNTs into special schools from September 2022. This reassignment was delayed due to an industrial relations process. The "non-cooperation instruction" was lifted in late November 2022. At March 2023 the equivalent of 35.5 WTE have been reassigned to support special schools. In parallel, a total of 80.67 WTE have been recruited to the dedicated special school posts. This represents 36% of the posts allocated to special schools in 2021 and 2022.

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 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 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. CDNTs and Lead Agencies report on the number of vacancies rather than the number of staff appointed.

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.

CDNT staff replacement timeframe is variable as this is heavily dependent on a number of factors including the candidates 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.
- A comprehensive Team Development Programme 2020/2021 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 the implementation of the new model of service, will also support staff retention. All resources from this Programme are available online for CDNMs
- An extensive CDNT Training and Development Programme 2022/2023 has been launched. This is supported with dedicated funding and based on the current competency gaps identified and prioritised by the National CDN Forum. The HSE and Lead Agencies are committed to providing ongoing training and development supports for CDNT staff supporting their professional development and retention.
- A secure site for CDNMs and their staff has been set up on Basecamp to facilitate sharing of training and development resources as well as clinical and service resources.

As stated above, 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.

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.

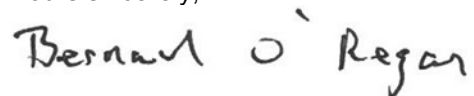
Workforce planning is a key priority for the Irish Health Service. The Health Services People Strategy (2019-2024) guides the teams work to "Engage, develop and value our workforce to deliver the best possible care and services to the people who depend on them".



Disability Operations are in the process of developing a workforce plan for Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) in collaboration with our colleagues in HR and clinical programmes. The 2022 Staff Census & Workforce Review for CDNTs is complete and each Children's Disability Network Manager (CDNM) will have a report for their own area and the national composite has been shared with relevant stakeholders; this will inform workforce planning, recruitment and retention initiatives at CDNT level. In addition, the HSE have commissioned the ESRI to undertake a Workforce Demands Project to 2035 for Community Services including Disability Services this work will further inform the Workforce Plan for CDNTs.

Recruitment and retention continue to be a priority for the services with Lead Agencies running rolling recruitment campaigns. In addition, a training needs analysis was undertaken by Disability Operations and a budget of €500k has been ring fenced for CDNT staff training and development.

Yours sincerely,



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

