



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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9th June 2023

Deputy Denis Naughten,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: denis.naughten@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Naughten,

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: 16968/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the steps being taken to support the provision of allied health services to children with a disability within the community; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

The National Access Policy to CDNT and Primary Care services

The National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay ensures that children are directed to the appropriate service based on the complexity of their presenting needs i.e. Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children's Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties. Children may access supports from a Children's Disability Network Team or from Primary Care depending on the complexity of their needs.

Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs)

There are ninety one Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) providing services for children with complex disability needs aged 0 – 18 years.

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.

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.

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.

Retention and Recruitment

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, the HSE continues to explore a range of options to enhance the recruitment and retention of essential staff into CDNTs.

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.

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

- Confined competition to fill all vacant senior posts across all disciplines on CDNTs
- 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 while they await CORU registration
- Expansion of therapy assistants in the system with HSE supporting individuals to return to education to qualify as therapists.
- Increase in the number of student clinical placements on CDNTs.

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. There are also national panels in place for occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, and speech and language therapists.

To sustain 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 the 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 €660k dedicated funding. This programme of learning is focused on competency gaps identified and prioritised by the teams.

In addition, 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.

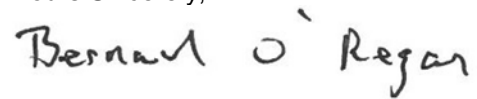
Filling the current staffing vacancies will take time. In the interim, the HSE continues to drive a number of initiatives to reduce waiting times for children and families. These include sourcing therapy assessments and interventions externally via private service providers. In addition, the level of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



support to CDNTs has been increased. Both of these will facilitate the Children's Disability Network Teams to focus on the provision of intervention for children on their caseloads.

The HSE remains committed to the delivery of appropriate services for children with disabilities and will continue to work with families and staff to develop services that meet their needs.

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**

