



**Oifig an Stiúrthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,**  
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta,  
An Chéad Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15,  
Áras Phlásóg na Rós, Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile,  
Páirc Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta,  
Caladh an Treoigh,  
Luimneach.

**Office of the Assistant National Director,**  
National Disability Team,  
First Floor- Offices 13, 14, 15,  
Roselawn House, University Business Complex,  
National Technology Park,  
Castletroy,  
Limerick.

16<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Deputy Holly Cairns,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [holly.cairns@oireachtas.ie](mailto:holly.cairns@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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: 20342/24**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth whether his attention has been drawn to an issue in special schools where only students who reside in the CDNT area of the school itself are able to access therapies within the school; whether this residency requirement is departmental or HSE policy; 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.

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. In addition, the recruitment target of 300 Therapy Assistants over the next 2 and ½ years to work on CDNTs will also support children onsite in special schools with additional needs arising from their disability.

The HSE and its partner Service Providers are delivering considerable levels of therapy supports to special schools, including: Speech and Language Therapy; Psychology; Occupational Therapy; Physiotherapy & Social Work. Updated, validated information collated for February 2024, shows that 8,235.2 therapy hours were provided per week, which equates to 235.29 WTEs.



With regard to the specific question asked, special schools will receive the dedicated quantum of health supports from the CDNT in whose catchment area the school is located.

All children enrolled in these special schools will be eligible to access the dedicated resources regardless of their complexity or their home address. It is acknowledged that some children attend special schools outside of their CHO area. This will not impact on their eligibility to access the dedicated, school based supports.

Please see the attached MEMO, *Guiding Principles for the restoration of on-site health supports in identified special schools*. This MEMO provides guiding principles for CDNTs providing school based supports. These are general principles that will facilitate the requirement for some local variance based on the available resource, geographical spread as well the size and number of impacted special schools in the area. They apply only to special schools in receipt of dedicated, on-site health supports provided via the 2021 and 2022 allocation of posts.

### **Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People**

The HSE's Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People was approved by the HSE Board on July 28th and launched by the Government and the HSE on Tuesday 24th October 2023.

The Roadmap is a targeted Service Improvement Programme to achieve a quality, accessible, equitable and timely service for all children with complex needs as a result of a disability and their families.

It sets out the overall aim for Children's Disability Services, provided by the HSE and its partner agencies, for every child to have a childhood of inclusive experiences where they can have fun, learn, develop interests and skills, and form positive relationships with others in a range of different settings.

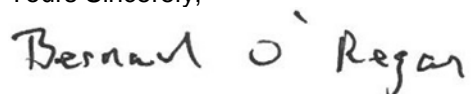
The Roadmap actions includes a robust suite of 60 actions, including 21 on CDNT Retention and Recruitment targets, and many of which are now in train.

### **The Roadmap's Working Group 5. concerns Engagement with Education and Support for Special Schools.**

As mentioned above, ongoing recruitment of an additional 136.3 senior posts remains a priority to restore health and social care supports historically provided in special schools as directed by the Government.

HSE National Disabilities will continue engagement with the Department of Education, National Council for Special Education and National Education Psychology Services, to optimise health and education integration for the benefit of children with disabilities. The recruitment target of 300 Therapy Assistants over the next 2 and ½ years to work on CDNTs will also support children onsite in special schools with additional needs arising from their disability.

Yours Sincerely,



**Bernard O'Regan**  
**Assistant National Director**  
**National Disability Team**

