



**Oifig an Stiúrthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,**  
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta,  
An Chéad Uirlár - 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.

18<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Deputy Marian Harkin,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [marian.harkin@oireachtas.ie](mailto:marian.harkin@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Harkin,

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: 44528/24**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of occupational therapists in place across all CHO areas, specifically related to disability services, in tabular form (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Details Supplied: I have been contacted in regard to the level of OT services related to Disability in Co. Longford. It is my understanding the OT post, specifically related to Disability, in Longford is not a permanent position and I would be grateful if you could clarify the situation in this regard. As you know, people with disabilities need continuity of services and cannot be without services each time an OT leaves. Can you confirm if the issue in Longford is due to lack of funding or is it a recruitment issue)?

**HSE Response**

The HSE is the largest employer in the State, with approximately 147,557 whole time equivalent (WTE) direct HSE and S38 organisations employees. Of this, there are 2050 Occupational Therapy WTEs. These figures do not include employees of S39 agencies funded by the HSE for the provision of services.

There are currently 21,179 WTEs employed in Disability Services (HSE and S38 agencies) and of this, there are 340 Occupational Therapy WTEs ( 385 personnel) employed specifically in Disability Services.

**Staffing Reports**

The Strategic Workforce Planning and Intelligence Unit has overarching responsibility for the production of employment monitoring reports/Health Service Personnel Census (HSPC) and National Absence Report and Staff Turnover Report.



Information pertaining to staffing levels in health services are generated by the HSE Strategic Workforce Planning & Intelligence Unit. Information is available per care group area including Disability Services and can be obtained at the following web link:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/our-workforce/workforce-reporting/social-care.html>

It is important to note that the reports provided by the HSE Strategic Workforce Planning & Intelligence Unit refer to staff numbers in the HSE and in S38 organisations and do not include staff employed in S39 organisations.

Occupational therapists work across a wide range of health services including various services provided by Disability services.

### **Childrens Disability Services**

With regard to childrens' disability services, therapy staff including Occupational Therapists are employed in the Childrens Disability Network Teams (CDNTs)

93 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.

The model of service for all CDNTs is family-centred and based on the needs of the child. This includes universal, targeted and specialised supports and interventions, as appropriate to the individual child and family. It is based on the objectives of empowering and supporting parents and others who are with the child on a daily basis to facilitate the child's developmental needs.

The CDNTs are currently providing services and supports for over 42,000 children and strategies and supports for urgent cases on the waitlist where staffing resources allow. However, there are significant challenges for CDNTs including:

- Significant staffing vacancies
- Growth in numbers of children with complex needs as a result of their disability.
- Growth in demand for Assessment of Need, diverting further resources away from interventions.

The attached CDNT Staff Census and Workforce Review 2023 gives a picture of the staff working in our children's disability teams on October 11<sup>th</sup> 2023. An industrial relations process impacted the return of data captured in October 2023 and delayed publication of the report.

The 2023 census and workforce review shows,

- Total number of filled whole time posts - 1,437 up 3% on last year
- Total number of filled therapy posts - 1,179
- Total number of vacancies nationally at 11/10/23 - 817.23

Year	Total approved whole time posts	% Increase year on year	Total filled whole time posts	% Increase year on year	No of therapy posts
2023	2,255	7%	1,437	3%	1179
2022	2,102	10%	1,395	2%	1183
2021	1,892		1,367		1173

While we do not have the details nationally regarding the specific OT post referred to in the question, if this refers to childrens' disability services, we are aware that there are 3.8 WTE approved for the Longford CDNT and last October 2023, there was one vacant OT WTE in this team.



## 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 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.

The Roadmap, now in its implementation phase, has 60 actions and has established four Working Groups which report into a Service Improvement Programme Board every month which in turn reports to the Roadmap Oversight Group chaired by the Minister of State, Ann Rabbitte.

Working Group 3: Workforce – has 21 actions dedicated to Retention of specialised CDNT staff, Recruitment of new graduates and experienced staff for all CDNTs, Deployment of Students/Trainees/New Graduates and Development of Existing Staff.

### Recruitment

The HSE is operating in a very competitive global market for healthcare talent as there are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals across the globe. The demand for these HSCP professions significantly outstrips supply both nationally and internationally. The HSE Resourcing Strategy '*Resourcing our Future*' was launched in May 2023 to ensure a sufficient domestic supply of health care staff. The strategy is being implemented by the services locally to maximise the resourcing and delivery of publicly funded health services for the future.

Seven of the disciplines working in children's disability teams have been included on the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Critical Skills Occupations List.

However, through ongoing effective work with our funded agencies with regard to recruitment, we undertook a focused Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) recruitment and interview process in 2024.

Work is ongoing to increase recruitment into disability services from recruitment stage through to promotional activity. Webinars were held in July 2024 '**Working in a Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) to increase interest in CDNTs and the presentation from this is available** through <https://careerhub.hse.ie/cdnt-webinar/>

These webinars were well attended with all participants encouraged to register their interest for a job within Children's Disability Network Teams through [Childrens Disability Network - HSE Career Hub](#)

The HSE is optimising multiple applicant engagement opportunities to encourage uptake of CDNT vacancies including recruitment fairs, outreach to third level colleges and secondary schools, presence at national events such as the recent Ploughing Championships and virtual engagements. In addition, the clinical placements in CDNTs have been increased so that students graduate with an interest in and familiarity with CDNTs.

To optimise recruitment into our funded agencies, the HSE have facilitated direct access for funded agencies to existing HSE HSCP panels which will shorten the recruitment process for them and will provide direct access to competent and eligible candidates. The HSE have also enabled our funded agencies to advertise their vacant posts through our advertisement channels which provides them with direct access to the substantial candidate pools registered the HSE's CareerHub portal.

These activities form part of an ongoing suite of recruitment initiatives to populate vacancies on Children's Disability Network Teams.

Yours Sincerely,



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

