



Príomhoifigeach Daoine

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Mr. Paul Murphy, TD

09 April 2025

PQ 15026/25 (Health) - To ask the Minister for Health To ask the Minister for Health the number of full-time psychologists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists employed by the HSE in each CDNT nationwide, and the number of vacancies for psychologists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists in each CDNT nationwide - Paul Murphy

Dear Deputy,

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question which was sent to the HSE for response.

By way of providing context, the HSE is operating in a very competitive global market for healthcare talent. There are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals across the globe. Seven of the disciplines working in Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) have been included on the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Critical Skills Occupations List.

To address resourcing challenges, 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 to maximise the resourcing and delivery of publicly funded health services for the future. Children's Disability Services benefit from resourcing actions in the HSE Resourcing Strategy including increasing Health & Social Care Professionals training places, delivery of an apprenticeship programme for Social Workers and development of further apprenticeship programmes.

Health & Social Care Professionals training places in Higher Education Institutes have increased with a growth in clinical placements in Children's Disability Network Teams- this serves to improve recruitment of Health & Social Care Professionals into Children's Disability Network Teams. Tertiary programmes are also being developed for Health & Social Care Professionals to increase the pathways into Disability services.

Within recruitment, there is a particular focus on Irish trained overseas applicants and international recruitment with a relocation package marketed to Irish trained Health & Social Care Professionals who have travelled overseas.

The HSE and funded agencies are focused on identifying barriers to workforce growth and putting in place corrective retention and recruitment initiatives. These initiatives have led to the above-described marked growth in CDNT staffing levels in 2024, particularly in Health & Social Care Professionals roles.

The CDNT vacancy rate remains high and intensive work will continue in 2025 to bolster CDNT services through ensuring there are sufficient team members to deliver the services children, and their families need.

Following on, please find below data relating to each Health Region detailing the number of whole-time equivalents (WTE) for psychologists, speech and language, therapists and occupational therapists for each Region and each CDNT under each health region. The number of vacancies for these disciplines is also detailed under each health region and each CDNT within that health region.

These relate to employment and vacancy levels as of 16/10/24. Active recruitment into vacant positions was ongoing as of 16/10/24 and it should be noted that vacancy levels are likely to have further dropped since 16/10/24 across many CDNTs.

There are 93 x CDNTs of which HSE, Section 38 and Section 39 funded agencies are employers of CDNT staff.

- The number of HSE led CDNTs is: 43
- The number of Section 38 led CDNTs is: 25
- The number of Section 39 led CDNT is: 25

Regarding filling CDNT vacancies, during 2024 there was a marked increase in the recruitment rate and filling of vacant positions across CDNTs. In the period 16/10/23 to 16/10/24 there was a 17% increase in CDNT staffing levels, with an additional 272+ WTE across the teams, with 204 of the 272 being Health & Social Care Professionals.

- To achieve this there was intensive recruitment efforts across the HSE, Section 38s and Section 39s to onboard staff.
- Recruitment was bolstered by optimising access to relevant applicant pools: the opening up of HSE panels, HSE advertising streams and candidate pools (CareerHub 38k+ registered applicant pools) to CDNTs in the Section 38s and Section 39s – this gave a substantial expansive boost in advertising and engagement into targeted applicant pools.
- In addition, to boost recruitment by improving the perception of working in Disabilities and CDNTs there was sustained outreach and engagement: Multiple engagements to secondary schools, HEIs, international applicants representing wider HSE, Section 38s and Section 39s.
- To further support the service provision by Health and Social Care Professionals on the CDNTs there is ongoing of development of additional disciplines to expand skills mix and applicant pools, in 2024 the role of Health & Social Care Assistant (Therapy Assistant) was developed for use by all CDNTs which is viewed as major enabler by CDNT Health and Social Care Professionals.
- These activities form part of an ongoing suite of initiatives to populate vacancies, increase retention and improve the capacity to deliver services in Children's Disability Network Teams.

Regarding wider Disability services, capacity is being further boosted by an additional 1146+ WTE (as of February 2025) on the 01/01/2024 figures.

I trust this is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mairéad Ryan
National HR