



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,

17th February 2025

Deputy Brian Brennan,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: brian.brennan@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Brennan,

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: 2447/24

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the efforts being made to recruit staff and reduce waiting lists for the children's disability network team assessment and intervention; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Childrens Disability Services

In line with the Progressing Disability Services model, 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.

Each CDNT covers a specific geographical area and holds a waiting list for children with complex needs residing in that area.

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

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, has four Working Groups which report into a Service Improvement Programme Board every month which in turn reports to the Roadmap Oversight Group which was 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.

The 2024 National CDNT Staff Census was run on 16/10/2024 and a CDNT Workforce Report will be published in due course. The draft CDNT Workforce data details a 22% vacancy rate, or 529.77 whole time equivalent (wte), a noted improvement on the 29% vacancy rate in the 2023 Workforce Review. Vacant posts are those unfilled as of Oct 16th 2024 which require recruitment.

There was a 271.77 wte net gain of staff into CDNTs in the past 12 months to 16/10/2024. The HSE December 2024 Census notes accelerated recruitment growth across Disabilities services, therefore we can predicate further growth in CDNT recruitment in the 16/10/24 - 31/12/24 period.

Recruitment

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 a marked growth in CDNT staffing levels in 2024, particularly in Health & Social Care Professionals roles.

The HSE optimises 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 and virtual engagements.

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 on the HSE's CareerHub portal.



In 2025 the HSE and funded agencies will continue to focus on maximising recruitment potential and engagement within the current applicant market to achieve workforce growth.

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

Yours Sincerely,

Bernard O'Regan
Assistant National Director,
HSE Access and Integration,
National Disability Services

