

**Príomhoifigeach Daoine**

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí  
Sláinte Ospidéal Dr. Steevens',  
Baile Átha Cliath 8, D08 W2A8

**Chief People Officer**

Health Service Executive,  
Dr Steevens' Hospital,  
Dublin 8, D08 W2A8

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)  
[@hselive](https://twitter.com/hselive)

t 01 635 2319  
e [nationalhr@hse.ie](mailto:nationalhr@hse.ie)

Brendan Smith, TD

28 October 2025

**PQ 53058/25 (Health): To ask the Minister for Health the progress to date in the training and recruiting of therapy assistants by the HSE; and if she will make a statement on the matter. - Brendan Smith**

Dear Deputy,

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

Dear Deputy Smith,

The HSE has a workforce of 149,221, of which 21,843 are Health and Social Care Professionals. The number of therapy assistants in the health services is relatively small, see below

| Grade Code   | Grade Name                          | WTE           | Headcount  |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| 6503         | Physiotherapy Assistant             | 146.64        | 163        |
| 6504         | Speech & Language Therapy Assistant | 5.74          | 6          |
| 6505         | Occupational Therapy Assistant      | 92.21         | 102        |
| 6521         | Psychologist, Assistant             | 63.66         | 70         |
| 6525         | Radiography Assistant               | 39.65         | 45         |
| 6526         | Audiologist, Assistant              | 5.79          | 7          |
| <b>Total</b> |                                     | <b>353.69</b> | <b>393</b> |

The HSE recognises that it is operating in a fiercely competitive employment market for healthcare workers, we are therefore examining and exploring other healthcare grades who can support the delivery of healthcare services. To this end, the role of Health and Social Care Assistant, commonly known as Therapy Assistant, has been developed with an initial focus on Disabilities. This role supports the Health & Social Care Professionals in delegating tasks of client care and support to the Therapy Assistant and for those tasks to be carried out under the supervision of the CORU registered Health & Social Care Professional, thus adhering to the professional regulation requirements of the Health & Social Care Professional.

The key difference is that the role is not a profession/ discipline specific role, the Therapy Assistant can be delegated tasks from across the range of Health & Social Care Professionals on an inter-disciplinary basis. This enables the service user to experience integrated, co-ordinated supportive care across a number of health and social care needs. This interdisciplinary role was developed for Children's Disability services, however the role infrastructure (eligibility/ entrance criteria, training, governance, educational pathways) has been developed to be applicable to all health and social care settings (wider Disabilities, Acute Care, Primary Care, Mental Health etc.) and therefore the role has wider scalability with health and social care settings.

To support an agile model of support, the Health & Social Care Assistant may carry out multiple tasks which have been delegated by a number of different Health & Social Care Professionals, depending on the needs of the service and the individual service user. The delegation of tasks enables the Health & Social Care Professional to operate at the full of

their regulated practice and enable the service user to experience integrated, co-ordinated supportive care across a number of health and social care needs.

Therapy Assistants may be recruited as a “generic” Health & Social Care Assistant, or they may be recruited as discipline specific Assistant grades, dependent on the needs of the service and workforce profile of the Health & Social Care Professions in that unique team and service.

With regard to training of the Therapy Assistant, the Therapy Assistant undergoes the normal induction for the team which they are joining. The Therapy Assistant develops skills and knowledge through the implementation of an individualised training and development plan which meets the needs of the individual and the service in which they are employed. Samples of individualised training plans were developed for Children’s Disability Teams, which provide a foundational template for the development of individualised training plans for other health and social care settings. The Health & Social Care Professional designs and delivers the training needed for safe delegation of tasks to the Therapy Assistant, for the Health & Social Care Professionals’ own discipline. Furthermore, CORU have published standards for safe task delegation and stipulate that it is the responsibility of the delegating Health & Social Care Professional to ensure the assistant has “the knowledge, skills, competence and experience to carry out the task safely and effectively”.

There is a limited availability of Health & Social Care Professionals both nationally and internationally. Therefore there is a requirement to partially address the gap through optimizing the skill mix within a team- to develop who could carry out a range of tasks which have been identified as providing key support to those receiving health and social care interventions and support. Task delegation is a vital component of health and social care practice. The safe delegation of tasks from scarce skill disciplines to an Assistant role supports the Health & Social Care Professionals in carrying out more complex support and interventions. The HSE will continue to seek funding for the role of Therapy Assistant through the estimates process.

During 2026, the HSE will work with the Educational Training Boards on the development of a FETAC Level 5 course for Therapy Assistants to support the delegation of tasks from across the range of relevant Health & Social Care Professionals, with the aim of broadening the applicant pool of qualified to undertake this work.

I trust this is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely,

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Mairéad Ryan  
National HR