



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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14<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Deputy Pauline Tully,  
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Dublin 2.  
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Dear Deputy Tully,

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: 54549/23**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of staffing posts required to fully staff children's disability network teams; the number of these posts that have not yet been funded; the staffing costs involved in filling all posts that have not yet been funded; the effect demographic pressures are likely to have on the staffing needs of CDNTs over the next five and ten years, respectively, in tabular form; 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. All the posts on the CDNTs are funded posts.

Based on the CDNT Staffing Census (Oct 2022), there are over 700 vacant whole time equivalent posts in CDNTs. The HSE continues to explore a range of options to enhance the retention and recruitment of essential staff across all aspects of the health services.

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 HSE Community Operations Disability Services is working collaboratively with the CDNT lead agencies at CHO level to promote CDNTs as a workplace of choice in a competitive employment market.



The CDNTs are currently providing services and supports for 45,741 children and strategies and supports for urgent cases on the waitlist where staffing resources allow.

In addition, substantial work has been undertaken by the HSE to develop a Roadmap for Service Improvement for Disability Services for Children and Young People which was approved by the HSE Board on July 28th and was launched by the Government and the HSE on Tuesday 24th October 2023.

The actions also include a robust suite of CDNT Retention and Recruitment targets, the majority of which are now in train. For example;

- National Team Development Programme (delivery of the 2<sup>ND</sup> extensive two year programme prioritised by the CDNMs will be completed by Mar '24)
- Online lunchtime staff webinars (on-going monthly)
- Online basecamp account for staff and team managers to share innovative programmes, practices and resources across the country
- Confined Senior grade competition for CDNTs - completed
- Marketing CDNTs as a workplace of choice
- HSE HR engagement with graduates in person and via webinar
- Recordings of CDNT staff and parents on benefits of working or receiving services from a CDNT, used for recruitment of staff off national panels
- HSE Recruitment, Reform and Resourcing has featured CDNTs on their "Service in the Spotlight", hosted on the HSE Career Hub. The 16,000 individuals now registered on the hub will receive notice of the targeted recruitment campaign for CDNTs and be encouraged to share with family and friends, extending our reach into the market.

The HSE acknowledge the current challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff and work is also progressing to commence the following;

- Student Sponsorship Programmes
- Targeted recruitment campaigns for 462 HSCP including clinical specialists, senior and staff grade therapies will commence in Jan 2024 to fill existing vacancies on HSE, S.38 and S.39 Lead Agency teams.

Actions also being led by national HR and/or National Disabilities, are for example;

- Increasing number of new clinical psychology trainee placements per annum
- Return to Work incentivised programme for recent therapist retirees

In addition, Minister of State, Anne Rabbitte, has convened a Disabilities Workforce Enhancement Group, including National Disability Operations Team, National HR and NCPPD representation, focused on the immediate, medium and long term sustainability of Disabilities workforce, including CDNT.

### **Demographic Pressures**

The Disability Capacity Review to 2032 shows that, overall, the disability population is expected to grow up to 2032, with a change in the overall age structure that will affect demand for disability services.

The fastest growth will be for young adults (up a third by 2032) and over 55s (up a quarter by 2032). The importance of early intervention and effective services for children and young people is important in this context to meet their needs now and to mitigate the requirement down the line of increasingly complex need coming through in young adults including earlier residential service, which is also seen in current DSMAT figures.

As the future course of birth rates is unknown, projecting the future size of child population is an uncertain exercise. The Disability Capacity Review considered the Central Statistics Office's analysis of population projection called M2F2 and indicated that:



- There will be a steady decline to 2032 in the number of under-6s and projects a 15% drop to 2032 relative to 2018
- A small increase of about 3% for those aged 6 -17 years in the mid-2020s, declining to around 91% of the 2018 level by 2032
- The school leavers age group of 18-19 year olds od projected to rise steadily by about 20% of 2018 levels to the late 2020s and then to decline to about 15% above the 2018 level. This reflects the baby boom of the first decade of the millennium.

There is some evidence of a higher share of children and young people presenting with more complex needs which is evident in the changing profile of children accessing CDNTs and school leavers, with more complex medical and behavioural support needs.

Please see the Table below which is taken from the *Disability Capacity Review to 2032, A Review of Disability Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements up to 2032*. This provides some information on estimates of staffing requirements for the CDNTs in future years.

**Table 32: Staffing of children's therapy teams 2018 (WTEs), and estimates of future staffing needed**

	Current (Jan 2018)	2019	2022	2027	2032
Occupational therapist	299	491	494	476	440
Speech & Language therapist	326	474	477	460	425
Psychologist	205	377	380	367	338
Physiotherapist	213	305	306	295	273
Social Worker	130	196	197	190	176
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,172</b>	<b>1,843</b>	<b>1,853</b>	<b>1,788</b>	<b>1,651</b>
Unallocated by specialty	9				
<b>+ 100 new posts from 2019</b>	<b>1,281</b>				

The estimates are based on those who require an enhanced service needing on average 50% more service

Yours Sincerely,



**Bernard O'Regan,**  
**Head of Operations - Disability Services,**  
**Community Operations**

