



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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18th December 2023

Deputy Willie O'Dea,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: willie.odea@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy O'Dea,

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: 55523/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth to outline in detail the significant staff development, retention and recruitment actions that his Department will take to improve children's disability services, as set out in the recent Roadmap to improve Children's Disability Services; 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.

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.

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 2ND 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

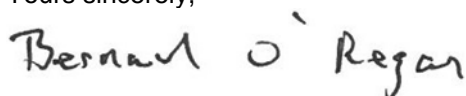
In addition, Minister of State, Anne Rabbitte, has convened a Disabilities Workforce Enhancement Group, including National Disability Operations Team, National HR and NCPPD representation, focused on the immediate, medium and long term sustainability of Disabilities workforce, including CDNT

HSE National Disabilities is working with NCPPD and the National HSCP Office to increase student clinical placements on CDNTs with appropriate support structures to ensure an optimal learning experience as a priority. As an interim measure, National Disabilities are drafting a baseline for number of students per discipline per CDNT (filled posts) based on filled posts and the experience of teams over the past year in this area.

The HSE as part of wider attraction strategy visit 4th year students in Higher Education Authorities (HEAs). Last year our HR Team profiled CDNT services as a workplace of choice and this engagement will take place over 2024.

The HSE also have stands in career fairs at national regional and local level showcasing all our services and the career paths open to new candidates.

Yours sincerely,



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

