



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

Office of the Head of Operations,
Disability Services/Social Care Division,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369
Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

1st February 2024

Deputy Colm Burke,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: colm.burke@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Burke,

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: 56656/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if he will provide the necessary funding to increase the capacity of early intervention in school aged teams to address issues relating to long waiting lists and inadequate service provision for children with additional educational needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Childrens Disability Network Teams (CDNTs)

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 an additional 136.3 WTEs to restore pre-existing services in 104 special schools. In addition, the recruitment target of 300 Therapy Assistants over the next 2 and ½ years to work on CDNTs will also support children onsite in special schools with additional needs arising from their disability.

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.



However, there are significant challenges for CDNTs including:

- Significant staffing vacancies
- Growth in numbers of children with complex need
- Growth in demand for Assessment of Need, diverting further resources away from interventions.

Budget 2024 was published by the Government on the 10th October 2024. The HSE is currently working with the Department of Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth to finalise the Service Plan for 2024.

Significant work is ongoing to improve Childrens' Disability Services.

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 was approved by the HSE Board on July 28th and launched by the Government and the HSE on Tuesday 24th October 2023.

The Roadmap 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. It sets out the overall aim for Children's Disability Services, provided by the HSE and its partner agencies, that for every child to have a childhood of inclusive experiences where they can have fun, learn, develop interests and skills, and form positive relationships with others in a range of different settings.

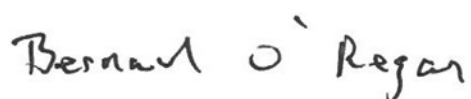
The Roadmap actions include a robust suite of 60 actions including 21 CDNT Retention and Recruitment targets, the majority of which are now in train. An intense and focused recruitment campaign to fill the remaining posts continues.

With regard to funding, the Roadmap actions will optimise the use of existing budgets including time-related savings whilst additional funding requirements outlined below is progressed through the Estimates and budgetary processes.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>2023 Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• €11m (Budget 2023) to implement the Special Schools initiative• Additional €11.5m to implement the Waiting List Initiative to provide diagnostic assessments for those children on waiting lists | <p>2024 Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• €6.0m for additional 78 WTE paediatric posts to Primary Care CHNs to build service capacity to meet the needs of children with disabilities with non-complex need)• Funding to drive the Roadmap Service Improvement Programme<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Service Improvement Lead• 9 CHO Service Improvement Leads |
| <p>2025 Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• €12.55m for additional 180 CDNT posts (2025), half year costs*• €12.5m for 300 Therapy Assistant posts* | <p>2026 Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• €12.55m for additional 180 CDNT posts (2025), full year costs*• €12.55m for additional 180 CDNT posts (2026) half year costs* (FYC requires additional 12.55m in 2027) |

* This is a critical part of a two and half year commitment over 2023 – 2026 to enhancing the staffing levels on CDNTs to meet the needs of children and families.

Yours Sincerely,



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

