



Oifig an Stiúirthóir 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,
Limerick.

24th July 2024

Deputy Gary Gannon,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: gary.gannon@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Gannon,

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: 30966/24

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth for an update on the Government's plans to transfer therapists from HSE settings to special schools, given the evidence that having therapists placed directly in schools rather than in outside settings run by the HSE has many benefits, including immediate access to services, early intervention, and crisis management for students with special needs.

HSE Response

93 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. 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.

Please see the table below which gives information on the current status regarding recruitment therapy posts/ special schools.



Recruitment Status – Therapy Posts / Special schools

Therapy Posts ALLOCATED			Therapy Posts filled to date			Balance: unfilled posts		
	2021	2022		2021	2022		2021	2022
CHO1	1.00	11.50	CHO1	1.00	3.60	CHO1	0.00	7.90
CHO2	4.40	8.00	CHO2	4.40	2.00	CHO2	0.00	6.00
CHO3	0	20.50	CHO3	0	15.20	CHO3	0.00	5.30
CHO4	5.80	26.11	CHO4	2.50	20.55	CHO4	3.30	5.56
CHO5	4.30	22.10	CHO5	1.70	10.10	CHO5	2.60	12.00
CHO6	25.62	10.30	CHO6	16.70	5.60	CHO6	8.92	4.70
CHO7	16	2.00	CHO7	10.4	0.00	CHO7	5.60	2.00
CHO8	2.65	24.10	CHO8	0.00	10.40	CHO8	2.65	13.70
CHO9	27.65	11.80	CHO9	13.74	5.50	CHO9	13.91	6.30
TOTAL			TOTAL			TOTAL		
ALLOCATED	87.42	136.41	FILLED	50.44	72.95	UNFILLED	36.98	63.46

Therapy Assistant Posts 14.5 allocated in 2023			
	Allocated	Filled to date	Balance unfilled posts
CHO 2	3.5	2.00	1.50
CHO 4	7.5	2.50	5.00
CHO 7	3.5	0	3.50

The HSE and its partner Service Providers are delivering considerable levels of therapy supports to Special Schools, including: Speech and Language Therapy; Psychology; Occupational Therapy; Physiotherapy & Social Work.

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, now in its implementation phase, 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, 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 includes a robust suite of 60 actions, including 21 on CDNT Retention and Recruitment targets, and many of which are now in train.

The Roadmap' Working Group 3 Workforce: sets out a comprehensive range of staff retention, development and recruitment actions, which are critical to delivery of the Roadmap actions and importantly, the ongoing development of CDNT services to meet current and growing demand. It includes student sponsorship programmes for health and social care professionals (HSCP), 20 new clinical psychology trainee placements per annum from September, a recruitment plan for 462 HSCP by the end of 2024, and 300 therapy assistants over 2023-2025 to support HSCPs in delivering most effective and efficient services in environments appropriate to each child's needs. It includes a confined Senior grade competition and the upgrading of up to 60 senior posts to clinical specialist grade, initiatives to support retention, service quality and safety, and providing a career pathway.

The Roadmap's Working Group 5. concerns Engagement with Education and Support for Special Schools.

As mentioned above, ongoing recruitment of an additional 136.3 senior posts remains a priority to restore health and social care supports historically provided in special schools as directed by the Government.



HSE National Disabilities continue to engage with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Education in the context of ongoing discussions to explore further initiatives to progress the return of therapists to Special Schools.

Yours Sincerely,

Bernard O'Regan

Bernard O'Regan
Assistant National Director
National Disability Team

