



**Oifig an Stiúrthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,**  
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta,  
An Chéad Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15,  
Àras 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.

31<sup>st</sup> October 2024

Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [padraig.osullivan@oireachtas.ie](mailto:padraig.osullivan@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy O'Sullivan,

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: 38880/24**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth for an update on the next phase of the pilot programme to reinstate in-therapy supports to special schools; when the announcement of the next ten schools will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

The Health Services Executive, and the Lead Agencies it funds, have been working continuously to develop supports for children with Disabilities.

In line with Government policy, the HSE has recruited approximately 80 of the 136 additional posts provided for by Government to restore supports to special schools to pre-reconfiguration levels.

In August 2024, Government asked the HSE to initiate a *Special Schools Pilot*, of dedicated supports under the governance of the CDNTs to six special schools initially, two in Dublin and four in Cork. The HSE provided Forsa with a copy of the pilot and met with them to discuss a range of concerns and issues, including, but not limited to governance and management arrangements, clinical oversight, implications for services currently being provided by staff who would assigned to work in special schools and how to ensure that clinical recommendations would be implemented in a school setting.

The HSE agreed with Forsa that the issues identified would be addressed through the mechanisms in place. Forsa also requested that the commencement of the Pilot be delayed until additional staff were recruited. The HSE responded to Forsa indicating that this would not be possible as Government had clearly indicated that the Pilot was to be commenced



in September. However, the HSE assured Forsa that all posts would be backfilled and that every effort would be made, including approving the use of agency staffing, to expedite this.

In regard to the 6 special schools in the pilot, the assigned therapy supports in the 2 Dublin special schools commenced on September 30<sup>th</sup> and recruitment is in train for filling the assigned therapy WTE in the four CHO 4 special schools.

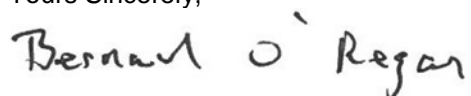
In the interim, Lead Agencies have confirmed the ongoing provision of specific therapy hours per month to support children in the four CHO 4 Special Schools until recruitment has been successfully completed. As above, these supports are provided in a range of settings depending on each child's needs.

The HSE is working with representatives from DCEDIY, Dept. of Education and the NCSE on the National Oversight Group to lead the overall Pilot. In addition, local working groups have been established at which many of the types of issues raised by Forsa will be addressed. The HSE is also arranging formal engagement with the Union to progress any other issues.

A further ten schools are to be included in the Pilot and the National Oversight Group has commenced consideration of which schools are to be included. It is expected that this will be concluded and the schools announced in due course.

In addition to considering phase 2 of the pilot, a further 10 special schools, the Oversight Group will now consider how the pilot will be assessed, informed by the Working Groups analysis on what is working well and any difficulties/challenges facing schools to be addressed.

Yours Sincerely,



**Bernard O'Regan**  
**Assistant National Director**  
**National Disability Team**

