



IASLT

The Irish Association of
Speech + Language Therapists

IASLT Statement: Recruitment concerns associated with HSE Pay and Numbers Strategy

Speech and Language Therapists were under embargo from October 2023, meaning that when a staff member moved or left, replacements were not allowed. At this time, we were aware of staffing vacancies of up to 45% in the speech and language therapy profession. The embargo was subsequently lifted on the 15th of July 2024 following an announcement from the CEO of the HSE and a pay and numbers strategy put in place. The strategy stated that the employment ceiling in the HSE would be capped at the December 2023 numbers. The outcome is that previously funded positions that were not filled in December 2023 were abolished. The current HSE Strategy contradicts the HSE's own resourcing strategy of 2023 whereby the huge workforce challenges are addressed with a clear need to increase the supply.

It is unacceptable that speech and language therapy posts have been left vacant or have been essentially abolished by the HSE. The implications for the speech and language therapy profession and people that we work with are wide ranging, including impacting on an ability to provide safe, effective services or early intervention. Significant risks, associated with unsafe staffing levels, have been made worse by the HSE Pay and Numbers Strategy which replaced the recruitment embargo. We know that services are being restricted and will be suspended due to this pay and numbers strategy. This contradicts Slaintecare, the HSE and Department of Health's strategy. Unprecedented levels of stress and burnout are also reported by speech and language therapists.

While additional training places in universities for speech and language therapists have been welcomed, due to reduced staffing and workplace pressure, many sites are now unable to facilitate student placements. Promised recruitment of graduate speech and language therapists have not been fulfilled with continuing increases in therapists trained in Ireland moving abroad for employment.

We echo calls for clarity for the various Health and Social Care professionals on the figures mentioned in the National Service Plan and reported additional posts, particularly in the context of significant additional HSE funding. This situation must be addressed immediately to avoid the further erosion of services. IASLT calls on the HSE to revise this strategy and restore speech and language therapy posts.

22nd October 2024