



Thursday, 31st May 2018

Deputy Gino Kenny,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
DUBLIN 2

PQ Ref. No 22450/18 - To ask the Minister for Health his plans to authorise eye care for children aged 12 to 16 years of age that have medical cards in mid-western areas of Dublin and other areas throughout the country; his further plans to reinstate the sixth class screening programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Kenny,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Eye Care for Children Aged 12-18 Years

Children aged up to 16 years who have a medical card or whose parents hold a medical card are eligible for HSE eye care services. Persons aged between 16 and 18 years who have a medical card or whose parents hold a medical card are eligible for services under the Community Ophthalmic Services Scheme (COSS). Where a child has a vision issue detected at preschool or school screening, they are entitled to receive a HSE service until the age of 16 years. CHOs 6 and 7 (Dublin South & West) are currently recruiting to establish primary care eye teams. Once in place, these teams will offer a service to eligible children.

6th Class Screening

A child's vision continues to develop up to eight years of age approximately. Early identification and intervention to treat a visual disorder maximises the sight a child will have. Vision surveillance and screening programmes identify children with visual impairment, or eye conditions that are likely to lead to visual impairment. Vision screening in Ireland is carried out under the guidance of Best Health for Children, the screening and surveillance programme of the HSE. Screening and surveillance takes place at birth, pre-school and primary school to ensure that children are screened at the most appropriate age.

The PCESRG Report recommended that all routine sixth class screening including the colour vision test should be discontinued as there is little clinical evidence for visual screening children in sixth class. The data has shown that there are very few or no new cases of eye disease detected e.g. amblyopia; most countries no

longer undertake school-exit screening. Instead screening is undertaken at an earlier age to ensure children with eye diseases are identified at the earliest possible stage and can access treatment services.

Screening programmes for colour blindness are not recommended as it is not a treatable condition and therefore not suitable for a national screening programme. Colour blindness is an occupational issue that can be managed by guidance counsellors/education supports.

I trust the above is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Walsh', written in a cursive style.

David Walsh,
Head of Operations
Community Services