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Phone: 0766959180**

**18<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

Deputy Louise O'Reilly,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ 15833/19**

"To ask the Minister for Health the cost of scoliosis outsourcing initiatives considering it now entails long-term follow up of children by a hospital (details supplied) resulting in numerous trips to the United Kingdom by teams and patients; his views on whether this is the best policy; and his further views on whether it would be better to invest in capacity and services to carry out the surgeries and treatments here".

**Details:** The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, London

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

I refer to your parliamentary question above to which I have been asked to provide a response.

As part of the outsourcing initiative to implement the HSE Scoliosis Waiting List Action Plan for 2017, families were offered the opportunity to have their child's surgery abroad. In total as part of this initiative 28 patients have had their treatment abroad in 2017 and 1 patient had their treatment as part of this initiative in 2018.

The investment in paediatric orthopaedics, to include scoliosis services has already improved access for surgery and out-patient review to address the lengthy waiting times experienced by children and young people with scoliosis. With the impact of this investment and additional resources being put in place we are delivering results and a reduction in waiting times being recorded;

- The number of patients on the waiting list for scoliosis related surgeries as of 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019 (Ex Suspensions\*) is 159, of which 83 are waiting for spinal fusion. Overall since the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2018, there has been a decrease of 15 or 15.3% in the waiting list for those waiting for spinal fusion surgeries (Ex suspensions).

- The number of children waiting over 4 months for spinal fusion surgeries has also reduced from 35 at the start of 2019 to 31 as of 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019, which is a reduction of 4 patients or 11.4%.
- The number suspensions as at 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019 is 15 (10 spinal fusions and 5 spinal other) compared to 62 (48 spinal fusion and 14 spinal other) at the start of 2018, which is a reduction of 75.8%.
- There has been an additional 60 posts approved, with staff starting at different months in 2018 and 2019. CHI is currently recruiting two additional general orthopaedic consultants which will further reduce waiting times for children for an orthopaedic outpatient appointment.
- All patient referrals to the orthopaedic spinal service at CHI are reviewed and clinically prioritised by a consultant. These patients are seen in order of clinical priority. Most patients are seen within 12 months.
- An additional 800 OPD appointments were given to patients in CHI at Crumlin in 2018 compared to 2017 which led to a 31% reduction in the overall orthopaedic outpatient waiting list.

These initiatives and developments have meant that the use of overseas services has reduced in 2019 as activity and capacity has increased within the Children's Health Ireland and Cappagh Hospital, we currently have no plans to treat any patients under the outsourcing initiative.

Details of the costs associated with outsourcing are subject to confidentiality that applies to the procurement process with regard to information supplied by bidders including costs, this also applies to follow on costs.

Yours sincerely,

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**Joe Gannon**  
**Chief Operations Officer**  
**Children's Health Ireland**