



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
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23rd December 2019

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
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Dear Deputy Ó Laoghaire

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 52680/19

To ask the Minister for Health the average waiting time for a child seeking access to a speech and language therapist; the number of children that have access to a speech and language therapist; and the average number of sessions the children receive per year.

HSE Response

Speech and Language Therapy Services are provided through Primary Care Teams in Community Healthcare Organisations to children and young people requiring assessment, diagnosis and treatment of speech, language and communication difficulties and feeding and swallowing difficulties.

Primary Care Operations compiles the data for Speech and language waiting lists. Information is not gathered on the average waiting time for a child seeking access to a Speech and Language Therapist nor on the average number of sessions children receive per year. However, Primary Care has provided the most recently available data which may answer this query. The tables in the attached appendices give the following information:

- Appendix 1 attached shows the number of children awaiting Initial Speech and Language Therapy Assessment up to the end of October 2019.
- Appendix 2 attached shows the number of children awaiting Speech and Language Therapy at the end of October 2019.
- Appendix 3 attached shows the number of children awaiting further Speech and Language Therapy at the end of October 2019.

With regard to the number of children that have access to a Speech and Language Therapist, Primary Care has provided information on the number of Speech and Language clients aged under 18 years of age seen by SLTs which is as follows;

Jan-Oct 2019 (10 months) = 197,906

Jan-Dec 2018 (full year) = 236,774

The HSE is aware of the numbers of children and adults waiting for therapy services and is fully cognisant of the stress this can cause to families. One of the key priorities for the HSE is to improve waiting times for therapy services by implementing a revised model of care for children's Speech and Language Therapy services and Psychology services and develop new models for Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy services.

In addition to the significant numbers of additional posts allocated to Primary Care and to Social Care under the Progressing Children's Disabilities Programme in recent years (see further details below), the HSE is committed to using innovative approaches, involving public, voluntary and private providers, to achieving a targeted reduction in therapy waiting lists.

The HSE is fully committed to working in partnership with service providers to achieve maximum benefits for children with complex needs, and aims to ensure that resources available are used in the most effective manner possible.

Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS)

The HSE is rolling out the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS) Programme, which requires a reconfiguration of all current HSE and HSE funded children's disability services into geographically-based Children's Disability Network Teams (Early-Intervention and School-aged or 0-18 Teams). This Programme aims to achieve a national equitable approach in service provision for all children based on their individual need and regardless of their disability, where they live or where they go to school. Based on the recommendations of the Report of the National Reference Group on Multidisciplinary Services for Children aged 5-18 Years (2009), its objectives are:

- ✓ One clear pathway to services providing equity of access for all children with disabilities, according to their need.
- ✓ Effective teams working with partnership with parents and Education to support children in achieving their potential.
- ✓ Available resources used to the optimum benefit for children and their families.

PDS is achieving this by forming partnerships between all the disability organisations in an area. The staff resources are then pooled according to expertise in the different types of disabilities to form local Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs). The CDNTs will then provide for all children with significant disability, regardless of presenting needs.

In tandem with Health service reform which seeks to have Health and Social Care "Networks" in place, HSE is well underway in terms of establishing a total of 96 Children's Disability Networks across each of the nine CHOs. A key enabler to establishment of the remaining Children's Disability Network Teams is the recruitment of the Children's Disability Network Managers. The establishment of these Networks was held up due to engagements with Forsa T/U in a conciliation process under the auspices of the WRC during March and April. The Labour Court recommended on 30th October that the HSE proposals regarding an interdisciplinary model for the delivery of services to children with disabilities should be accepted and that overall implementation of these arrangements should proceed. This is a critically important recommendation that underpins essential reform of Children's Disability Services under the Progressing Disability Services Policy. Subject to the approval of derogations by the Head of Community Operations, the appointment of these Network Managers can now proceed following the recent Labour Court ruling and it is anticipated that the appointments of CDNTMs will be progressed in Q1 2020.

It is intended that Children's Network Disability Services will be outcomes focussed, which is an approach setting out services to support children and young people to achieve outcomes. In addition, while recognising the lived experience of families, disability services should also aim to support families to achieve certain outcomes.

Please note that all HSE Areas planning reconfiguration continue to have significant Early Intervention and School Age Services in place, provided either directly by the HSE, or by voluntary service providers funded by the HSE, such as Enable Ireland, Kare, Muriosa Foundation, St. John of God Services, Brothers of Charity Services, St. Michael's House, Cope Foundation, CRC, Daughters of Charity Services etc.

National Policy on Access to Services for Children with a Disability or Developmental Delay

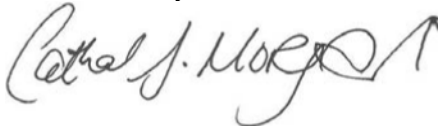
National HSE Disability and Primary Care are working together collaboratively with Community Health Organisations via their Chief Officers to support implementation of the HSE's National Policy on Access to Services for Children with a Disability or Developmental Delay. This policy will provide a single point of entry, signposting parents and referrers to the most appropriate service (Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children's Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties).

Additional funding for Therapeutic services across both Disability and Primary Care

NSP 2019 has provided for an additional 100 new therapy posts to be implemented over 2019/ 2020 to the Children's Disability networks. This is additional to existing resources in this area as follows:

- The above should be considered in light of previous investment secured by the HSE for therapeutic services which has been invested in the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (0-18s) Programme (PDS). Since 2014, the roll out of the PDS has entailed targeted investment of €14m and the provision of 275 additional therapy staff, to increase services for children with all disabilities.
- In 2013, additional funding of €20m was provided to strengthen primary care services. This comprised over €18.5m for the recruitment of over 260 primary care team posts and over €1.4m to support community intervention team development.
- There was also a €4m allocation within the 2016 Service Plan to facilitate the recruitment of Speech and Language Therapists to address waiting lists as part of the overall Speech and Language Therapy waiting list initiative within Primary Care and Social Care. The allocation provides for an additional 83 posts.
- In addition, the recruitment of a further 40 posts in Occupational Therapy (OT) commenced in Quarter 4, 2018. Currently the OT Service Improvement Working Group is reviewing options pertaining to the allocation of posts across CHO Areas. This is being done in conjunction with the findings of the OT Service Improvement report for Primary Care.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr. Cathal Morgan,
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations**

Appendix 1

Speech and Language Therapy - Number of 0-17 years old patients waiting for Initial Assessment - October 2019							
LHO	0 to 4 Mths	4 months & 1 day - 8 months	8 months & 1 day - 12 months	12 months & 1 day - 18 months	18 months & 1 day to 24 months	>24 months	Total
Cavan Monaghan	388	109	62	3	0	0	562
Donegal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sligo Leitrim	14	0	0	0	0	0	14
CHO1	402	109	62	3	0	0	576
Galway	360	19	7	0	0	0	386
Mayo	250	0	0	0	0	0	250
Roscommon	41	0	0	0	0	0	41
CHO2	651	19	7	0	0	0	677
Clare	172	12	4	0	0	1	189
Limerick	364	103	13	0	0	0	480
North Tipperary East Limerick	162	95	8	0	0	0	265
CHO3	698	210	25	0	0	1	934
Kerry	157	0	0	0	0	0	157
North Cork	160	44	0	0	0	0	204
North Lee	350	62	0	0	0	0	412
South Lee	328	37	33	57	36	104	595
West Cork	74	0	0	0	0	0	74
CHO4	1,069	143	33	57	36	104	1,442
Carlow Kilkenny	198	6	0	0	0	0	204
South Tipperary	192	35	0	0	0	0	227
Waterford	134	19	0	0	0	0	153
Wexford	231	262	189	7	0	0	689
CHO5	755	322	189	7	0	0	1,273
Dublin South East	122	36	19	22	17	0	216
Dun Laoghaire	120	50	13	10	12	0	205
Wicklow	6	12	27	0	0	0	45
CHO6	248	98	59	32	29	0	466
Dublin South City	168	91	31	44	3	0	337
Dublin South West	242	57	36	94	88	205	722
Dublin West	156	245	168	58	13	0	640
Kildare West Wicklow	383	117	4	0	0	0	504
CHO7	949	510	239	196	104	205	2,203
Laois Offaly	319	0	0	0	0	0	319
Longford Westmeath	270	123	75	0	0	0	468
Louth	238	0	0	0	0	0	238
Meath	64	42	0	0	0	0	106
CHO8	891	165	75	0	0	0	1,131
Dublin North	519	303	113	40	8	0	983
Dublin North Central	151	231	155	6	0	0	543
Dublin North West	373	281	107	73	0	0	834
CHO9	1,043	815	375	119	8	0	2,360
Total	6,706	2,391	1,064	414	177	310	11,062

Appendix 2

Speech and Language Therapy - Total Number of patients awaiting Initial Therapy - October 2019							
LHO	0 to 4 Mths	4 months & 1 day - 8 months	8 months & 1 day - 12 months	12 months & 1 day - 18 months	18 months & 1 day to 24 months	>24 months	Total
Cavan Monaghan	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Donegal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sligo Leitrim	50	22	6	0	0	0	78
CHO1	51	22	6	0	0	0	79
Galway	218	50	3	0	0	0	271
Mayo	105	36	3	1	0	0	145
Roscommon	83	54	0	0	0	0	137
CHO2	406	140	6	1	0	0	553
Clare	53	46	20	4	0	0	123
Limerick	144	50	25	24	0	0	243
North Tipperary East Limerick	67	14	5	1	0	0	87
CHO3	264	110	50	29	0	0	453
Kerry	81	16	1	0	0	0	98
North Cork	88	53	31	23	0	0	195
North Lee	187	190	145	31	14	7	574
South Lee	116	131	37	0	0	0	284
West Cork	51	29	13	1	0	0	94
CHO4	523	419	227	55	14	7	1,245
Carlow Kilkenny	103	137	93	166	60	0	559
South Tipperary	115	111	40	11	0	0	277
Waterford	118	122	143	169	16	1	569
Wexford	163	127	96	73	28	0	487
CHO5	499	497	372	419	104	1	1,892
Dublin South East	95	0	0	0	0	0	95
Dun Laoghaire	103	20	0	0	0	0	123
Wicklow	147	44	22	21	0	0	234
CHO6	345	64	22	21	0	0	452
Dublin South City	94	108	65	84	46	4	401
Dublin South West	147	98	67	64	0	0	376
Dublin West	158	160	135	96	40	24	613
Kildare West Wicklow	79	9	5	0	0	0	93
CHO7	478	375	272	244	86	28	1,483
Laos Offaly	107	125	98	19	0	0	349
Longford Westmeath	127	76	8	0	0	0	211
Louth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Meath	90	0	0	0	0	0	90
CHO8	324	201	106	19	0	0	650
Dublin North	418	392	124	0	0	0	934
Dublin North Central	83	59	36	18	0	0	196
Dublin North West	327	197	111	6	0	0	641
CHO9	828	648	271	24	0	0	1,771
Total	3,718	2,476	1,332	812	204	36	8,578

Appendix 3

Speech and Language Therapy - Number of 0-17 years old patients waiting for Further Therapy - October 2019							
LHO	0 to 4 Mths	4 months & 1 day - 8 months	8 months & 1 day - 12 months	12 months & 1 day - 18 months	18 months & 1 day to 24 months	>24 months	Total
Cavan Monaghan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Donegal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sligo Leitrim	11	0	0	0	0	0	11
CHO1	11	0	0	0	0	0	11
Galway	528	109	70	1	47	17	772
Mayo	84	3	0	0	0	0	87
Roscommon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CHO2	612	112	70	1	47	17	859
Clare	169	156	53	0	14	1	393
Limerick	356	203	107	0	58	35	759
North Tipperary East Limerick	91	93	49	0	0	0	233
CHO3	616	452	209	0	72	36	1,385
Kerry	233	90	2	0	0	0	325
North Cork	148	70	40	0	35	0	293
North Lee	187	268	177	29	44	12	717
South Lee	164	178	91	16	27	17	493
West Cork	220	103	32	0	8	0	363
CHO4	952	709	342	45	114	29	2,191
Carlow Kilkenny	70	84	21	0	8	0	183
South Tipperary	0	196	295	0	2	0	493
Waterford	5	38	17	1	18	3	82
Wexford	70	105	87	1	64	29	356
CHO5	145	423	420	2	92	32	1,114
Dublin South East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dun Laoghaire	10	0	0	0	0	0	10
Wicklow	12	14	0	0	0	0	26
CHO6	22	14	0	0	0	0	36
Dublin South City	131	170	86	3	88	77	555
Dublin South West	250	183	136	0	151	4	724
Dublin West	214	353	242	34	113	77	1,033
Kildare West Wicklow	106	21	0	0	0	0	127
CHO7	701	727	464	37	352	158	2,439
Laois Offaly	53	58	29	0	53	0	193
Longford Westmeath	299	171	74	0	0	0	544
Louth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Meath	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CHO8	352	229	103	0	53	0	737
Dublin North	666	612	191	0	0	0	1,469
Dublin North Central	59	110	68	0	6	0	243
Dublin North West	310	176	91	0	16	0	593
CHO9	1,035	898	350	0	22	0	2,305
Total	4,446	3,564	1,958	85	752	272	11,077