



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an tUas. Pat Bennett,
Príomhoifigeach, Eagraíocht Cúram
Sláinte Pobail, Lár Tíre, An Lú, An Mhí
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte,
Oifig Cheantair, Bóthar Ardáin, An
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4th March, 2019

Ms Fiona O'Loughlin T.D.,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re: Parliamentary Question – 7482/19

To ask the Minister for Health the way in which it is planned to reduce the waiting times being experienced by children in counties Laois and Offaly that are in need of an assessment for occupational therapy

-Fiona O'Loughlin

Dear Deputy O'Loughlin,

The Health Service Executive 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. I have examined the matter and outline the position as follows.

Please be advised that the HSE endeavour to provide the highest quality service within finite resources to all children in the Laois/Offaly area.

Please note that within the service, referrals accepted by the service are prioritised based on clinical need and placed on a waiting list. Access to the service will depend on the level of clinical need and the available capacity within the service.

Paediatric Occupational Therapy services are provided to children across Primary Care, Disability Services (Early Intervention Team & School Aged Teams) and Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Below is a summary of the available capacity In the Laois / Offaly Occupational Therapy Services:

- Primary Care Paediatric OT:
3 WTE's, with 1 vacancy.
This Paediatric vacancy has been prioritised for approval to backfill, by the Primary Care Management Team.
- Disability Paediatric OT:
EIT: 5.5 wte currently in post with 0.5 wte on maternity leave
SAT: 8 wte posts , 3 of which are vacant

All vacant posts have been submitted to HSE Paybill process for approval with 3 gone to NRS for processing.

- CAMHS:
3 WTE's. No vacant posts.

All paperwork for vacant posts has been forwarded by the OT manager to Senior Management, in Primary Care and Social Care, for approval under the Paybill process. Each management team must consider the backfilling of permanent vacancies in the context of budgetary demands.

Overall Note on Capacity within service:

Capacity is reduced when there are vacancies in the staffing complement. The timelines involved in our national recruitment service sourcing and providing a permanent replacement post holder 8-10 months.

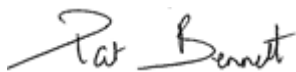
In addition, to any permanent vacancy we have the added challenge of multiple maternity leaves and some level of sick leave, which reduces the available capacity to deliver the services. All efforts are made by the Heads of Discipline, during a reduction in staffing, to maintain service levels as much as possible, but this can be very challenging as our workforce is predominantly female and we therefore have high levels of maternity and parental leave. Temporary / replacement staff can only be approved within budget parameters. Where approved, it can be challenging to source agency staff, with the correct skill set to maintain service delivery

However, wherever possible, within resources, waiting list initiatives and service improvement plans are implemented. In Laois/Offaly, service improvement plans were put in place for a period of 7 months with a focus on long waiters. The funding for these service improvement plans will come to an end on the 28th of February 2019, however, every effort will be made to maintain the progress that was achieved whilst having the additional agency staff. There are also a number of permanent posts progressed to our national recruitment service for permanent backfilling, so improved access will be maintained in 2019, as the core staffing levels are enhanced

CHO MLM have sought additional staffing in the 2019 estimates submission, for all paediatric services, as the current staffing complement, even if all posts were filled is unable to meet the growing demands for services, both in referral numbers / complexity of need and our statutory obligation to complete assessments under the AON legislation.

I trust the above is in order but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely,



Pat Bennett
Chief Officer CHO Area 8