



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
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28th January 2019

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: tommy.broughan@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Broughan,

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 54500/18

To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on the large increases in waiting lists for speech and language services; the measures he is taking to reduce the waiting lists for initial assessment, first therapy appointment and further therapy; his target for waiting lists for each of these aspects of speech and language; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

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.

For the period January to October 2018, a total of 25,413 children and young people have received an initial speech and language therapy assessment in Primary Care teams, and 174,781 therapy appointments were offered to children and young people with speech, language and communication difficulties.

Primary Care Operations has compiled the latest available waiting list data, at October 2018, for those aged 0 to 17 years and 11 months awaiting Speech and Language Therapy Services. Table 1 below includes the data for each of the 3 waiting lists – Initial Assessment, Initial Therapy and Further Therapy.

Initial Assessment:

As stated above a total of 25,413 initial assessments have been offered / provided to children and young people in Primary Care Speech and Language Therapy Services in the year to date. As of October 2018, a small proportion of those waiting, have been waiting longer than 12 months (5%).

In CHO7 a pilot initiative has been established to provide speech and language therapy in primary and secondary schools. A validation of the current waiting list is required to ensure that no child is on a waiting list for two services i.e. HSE and School services.

Numbers of people aged 0 to 17 years and 11 months awaiting Speech and Language Therapy Services. at end of October 2018

	Initial Assessment			Initial Therapy			Further Therapy		
	Total No Waiting	Waiting >1 yr	%	Total No Waiting	Waiting >1 yr	%	Total No Waiting	Waiting >1 yr	%
CHO 1	637	0	0%	112	0	0%	548	0	0%
CHO 2	517	0	0%	621	2	0%	914	0	0%
CHO 3	1,055	1	0%	449	8	2%	1,186	63	5%
CHO 4	1,659	266	16%	1,401	252	18%	2,511	420	17%
CHO 5	1,490	8	1%	1,607	204	13%	1,170	153	13%
CHO 6	289	16	6%	247	43	17%	102	0	0%
CHO 7	2,128	292	14%	1,335	167	13%	2,705	372	14%
CHO 8	1,464	0	0%	590	2	0%	950	12	1%
CHO 9	2,054	10	0%	1,006	0	0%	1,802	0	0%
Total	11,293	593	5%	7,368	678	9%	11,888	1,020	9%

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.

Current Status:

Fifty six Children's Disability Teams have already been established with a further eighty two Children's Disability Network Teams to be reconfigured from existing services in 2019. However, and in light of

Health reform which seeks to have “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. These posts were advertised on 19th November 2018. It is envisaged that the Children’s Disability Network Managers will be in place in Q1 2019.

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.

Additional funding for Therapeutic services across both Disability and Primary Care

Additional funding secured by the HSE for therapeutic services 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.

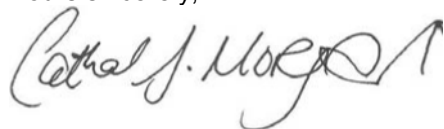
In 2013, additional funding of €20m was provided to strengthen primary care services. This comprised over €18.5m for the recruitment of over 260 primary care team posts and over €1.4m to support community intervention team development.

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.

The HSE also welcomes the recent announcement in Budget 2019 in relation to funding for 100 additional therapy posts for Assessment of Need and therapeutic interventions. This will enable the HSE to reduce the waiting list for Assessment of Need under the Disability Act and to drive implementation of the *Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme* through new staff appointments to reconfigured multi-disciplinary, geographic-based teams.

Yours sincerely,



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