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8th November 2019

Deputy Micheál Martin,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 38839/19 - To ask the Minister for Health the waiting times for aids and appliances for those under 18 years of age in each health area; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

-Micheál Martin

Dear Deputy Martin,

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 response.

Community Funded Schemes is a collective name for all of the many products, supports, supplies, appliances and aids that are provided through community services. There are a variety of products and services provided under the schemes. These products and services play a key role in assisting and supporting service users to maintain every day functioning, to remain living in their homes and local community. They also avoid the need for a hospital presentation or admission whilst also facilitating early discharge from hospital back into the community.

All referrals for Aids and Appliances are considered by a multidisciplinary team and requests are assessed and categorised based on clinical priority. Funding is then allocated to purchase items that are identified as highest clinical priority taking all circumstances of each individual concerned into account.

Please see Table 1 which shows the longest waiting time for Aids and Appliances for each Community Healthcare Organisation for people under aged 18. In CHO 2 and CHO9 there are no separate waiting lists for Paediatrics, and so the figure given is the longest waiting time for people of all ages. Due to the broad range of Aids and Appliances available, there may be large variances in wait time, as some area's waiting lists may be collated to encompass a wider variety of items, including specific items which may require customisation like electric wheelchairs, or smaller items such as orthotics or insoles.

Table 1:

CHO	Longest Waiting Time
1	12-39 Weeks
2	6-8 Weeks
3	>36 Months
4	16 Months
5	5 Weeks
6	6 Months
7	16 Weeks
8	>9 Months
9	7 Months

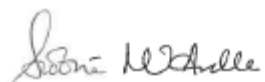
With specific regard to CHO3, currently there are 156 people under the age of 18 years on the Aids & Appliances waiting list greater than 36 months. Most of the items requested are low cost insoles that have low risks in comparison to other requests being discussed in the Resource Allocation Group meetings. All applications for Aids & Appliances are reviewed and based on the information supplied are prioritised appropriately and placed on the waiting lists. CHO3 has established a service improvement working group to develop a pathway for orthotic requests, in addition to undertaking a validation of the waiting list. It is anticipated that this initiative will result in a significant reduction in waiting times for orthotic products by year end.

As part of the HSE's Service Improvement Programme for Community Funded Schemes, a work stream has been dedicated to standardising provision of aids and appliances at national level. This work includes the establishment of a national approved list of items, national guidance for prioritisation, and standardised provision across the entire country, to help ensure that both the quality and equity of access to the service is improved, and that the 'postcode lottery' becomes a thing of the past.

While the availability of sufficient resources will undoubtedly remain a challenge for individual areas in addressing the expressed needs of their population, it is expected that from 2020 onwards there will be a significant diminution in the geographical variation that has previously existed.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Siobhán McArdle,
Head of Operations Primary Care,
Community Operations