



Children's Health Ireland

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann (SLÉ), Herberton, Siúlán San Séamas, Rialto, D08 HP97, Éire
Children's Health Ireland (CHI), Herberton, St James's Walk, Rialto, D08 HP97, Ireland

8th December 2020

Deputy Willie O'Dea,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 40855/20

To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there are many Down Syndrome children on a three year waiting list to be treated for arthritis; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that there was a commitment made that children with Down syndrome would be seen after referral within 12 weeks; his plans to address this very serious delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter”

Dear Deputy O'Dea

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

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) sincerely regrets that children and their families are experiencing long waiting times for their Rheumatology and MRI appointments. We recognize that too many children are waiting too long for their appointments and we are making every effort to reduce these waiting times.

During the initial phases of COVID-19, all face to face hospital outpatient reviews and most of the planned diagnostic tests, including MRI, were deferred in response to the pandemic. CHI at Crumlin has recommenced the vast majority of outpatient and diagnostic services, albeit at reduced numbers, due to public health guidelines on social distancing. Currently, Consultant Rheumatologists are seeing a number of patients back in the outpatient suite to include urgent patients and those who were deferred during the early phases of COVID-19. There is a significant waiting list at present due to the volume of referrals received by the Rheumatology Department on a year to year basis and for reasons detailed relating to COVID-19.

CHI confirm that a meeting was held with the Rheumatology Team and hospital representatives along with a number of advocacy groups in December 2019 to include Down Syndrome Ireland, Arthritis Ireland and the Irish Children's Arthritis Network. CHI would like to apologize for the delay in issuing the information leaflet. The leaflet has gone through a number of iterations and has been compiled with the assistance of UCD and is going through the final phase of graphic design and branding. It is the intention of CHI to publish this information leaflet shortly once the final version has been agreed.

Mission – To promote and provide child-centered, research-led and learning informed healthcare, to the highest standards of safety and excellence. We do this in partnership with each other, with children, young people and their families through a network of children's services in Ireland.

CRA Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20202295 Revenue Charitable Status CHY: 22235

Board Members: Prof James Browne (Chairman), Prof Niamh Brennan, Mr Con Cronin, Ms Mary Cryan, Mr Liam Dowdall, Prof Martin Elliott, Ms Catherine Guy, Dr Anne Kilgallen, Dr Gavin Lavery, Ms Brigid McManus, Mr Turlough O'Sullivan, Mr Sean Sheehan



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CHI continues to engage with the HSE/Department of Health is trying to secure funding for an additional MRI scanner and staff that are required to meet the need of current patients and those who require a MRI scan in the future. This has also been raised with the Minister of Health during a recent visit to CHI.

CHI apologize that children are experiencing a delay in accessing outpatient consultations and MRI services in the hospital due to challenges with the volume of referrals to the Rheumatology Service, as detailed above, and with COVID-19 restrictions.

There is an active recruitment campaign for an additional Rheumatology Consultant underway closing on December 11th 2020 following an earlier campaign in 2020 that did not result in the recruitment of the third Consultant Rheumatologist. It is anticipated that a suitable candidate can be recruited into this role as part of the wider Rheumatology Team.

This addition to the medical staff will allow for an increased number of patients to be seen, diagnosed and treatment initiated as part of the comprehensive Rheumatology service.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Gannon
Chief Operations Officer
Children's Health Ireland
Email: joe.gannon@nchg.ie

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