



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

12th January 2021

Deputy Pauline Tully,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 42369/20

"To ask the Minister for Health the average waiting time for a child to receive an appointment with a paediatric rheumatologist; the average waiting time between a child receiving an appointment and being examined by an paediatric rheumatologist; and if he will make a statement on the matter".

Dear Deputy Tully,

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 appointments.

There is a significant waiting list at present due to the volume of referrals received by the department on a year to year basis and for reasons relating to COVID-19. All Outpatient Department (OPD) referrals are triaged by the consultant rheumatologists and they are categorised based on their urgency.

The current waiting times, as a guide, are as follows; for those patients assessed as "urgent", the wait time is up to six months but the team tries to see these patients as soon as practically possible; for those categorised as "soon", the average waiting time is up to three years and those classed as "routine" can wait up to four years at present.

CHI recognises that these wait times are far too long and it is hoped that these times will reduce with the appointment of the third consultant and through the additional clinics being run at CHI at Connolly.

During the initial phases of COVID-19, all face to face hospital OPD reviews and most of the planned diagnostic tests 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 guidelines on social distancing. Currently, the 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. The team is also commencing some additional clinics in CHI at Connolly to address the number of patients on the waiting list.

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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There was an active recruitment campaign for an additional Rheumatology Consultant that closed 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
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