



5th January 2021

Deputy Richard Bruton,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 43411/20 - To ask the Minister for Health if he is satisfied that children who are fostered do not face obstacles in accessing services provided by his Department, for example, by requiring additional documentation or compliance requirements; and if he will consider the policies and practices now in place to ensure no unnecessary obstacles stand in the way of children who are likely to have priority needs.

-Richard Bruton

Dear Deputy Bruton,

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.

Relative to children who are not in State care, we're unaware of any additional obstacles that children in foster care face in accessing health care services.

In Dec. 2020 the HSE signed off on our revised *Joint Protocol for Interagency Collaboration between the HSE & Tusla to Promote the Best Interests of Children and Families*. This policy document describes how both agencies will work together, and with other agencies, to provide a person-centred pathway to meet the needs of children with a complex disability (and their families) in statutory care (e.g., foster or residential) or those inappropriately placed in other settings (e.g., long-term placement in respite; acute hospital beyond medical need). Regarding the prioritisation of referrals & accessing services, it notes that

1. Children with a complex disability in State care will access Acute Hospital; CAMHS; Disability; Primary Care & specialist services in the same way as other children;
2. The degree to which identified needs are complex will determine prioritisation (relative to other children needing these services); &
3. An 'in care' status must be an additional vulnerability factor that needs to be considered relative to children not in care.

We anticipate that implementation of this revised policy document will result in the HSE & Tusla working in a more collaborative & responsive manner to meet the needs of children with complex disability in foster care.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'TJ Dunford', written on a light-colored background.

TJ Dunford,
Interim Head of Operations Primary Care/A.N.D.
Community Operations