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14th August 2020

Pa Daly, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref no.s 20592/20 and 20594/20

“To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting a speech and language appointment in counties Cork and Kerry; the number waiting less than 3, 3 to 6, 6 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Daly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Children or adults, with or without a medical card or long term illness card, can be referred directly to the speech and language therapy service (SLT). There is no upper or lower age limit for eligibility to receive Primary Care SLT services. Clients who are under the care of a specialist service are not eligible to access Primary Care SLT services i.e. Early Intervention Team/Network Disability Team and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

All referrals are prioritised for initial assessment and then, depending on the outcome of clinical assessments, children are waitlisted for the appropriate intervention. Children are seen for intervention, in line with their assessed need and where clinically indicated, within the available resources.

Waiting times for Speech and Language Therapy Service are presented in tables 1, 2 and 3 below: the data outlined includes waiting times for Primary Care and HSE Funded Disability Agencies within Cork/Kerry Community Healthcare as per national returns.

From Mid-March 2020 arising from the COVID 19 pandemic, all services were disrupted, capacity was significantly reduced and also accordingly waiting times were impacted with the effect of a doubling of the numbers awaiting an appointment over 12 months.

Table 1 : Speech & Language Therapy Waiting List Figures - June, 2020

CKCH	Awaiting Initial Assessment			
	0-4 months	4-8 months	8-12 months	over 12 months
Primary Care	984	395	4	0
HSE Funded Disability Agencies	146	13	4	0
CKCH Overall Total	1130	408	8	0

Table 2 : Speech & Language Therapy Waiting List Figures - June, 2020

CKCH	Awaiting Initial Therapy			
	0-4 months	4-8 months	8-12 months	over 12 months
Primary Care	384	432	267	146
HSE Funded Disability Agencies	59	179	109	319
CKCH Overall Total	443	611	376	465

Table 3 : Speech & Language Therapy Waiting List Figures - June, 2020

CKCH CKCH	Awaiting Further Therapy			
	0-4 months	4-8 months	8-12 months	over 12 months
Primary Care	882	917	448	257
HSE Funded Disability Agencies	409	399	124	363
CKCH Overall Total	1291	1316	572	620

While Cork Kerry Community Healthcare has a plan in place for the structured and phased return of services, adherence to infection, prevention control measures to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19 will result in fewer appointments being available per day. In the absence of additional resources being made available, this will further impact on the waiting times for the speech and language therapy service. I appreciate the difficulties this creates for those waiting for a service and I acknowledge their continued patience and understanding.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Teresa O' Donovan
Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare