



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Office of the Head of Primary Care  
South East Community Healthcare  
HSE Offices, Lacken  
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Kilkenny

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22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020

Ms. Kathleen Funchion TD  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ 29729/20**

To ask the Minister for Health the number of occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists available for assessments and follow-up appointments for children in counties Carlow and Kilkenny; the wait time for assessments; and the wait time for follow-up services.

**PQ 31638/20**

To ask the Minister for Health the number of occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists available for both assessments and follow-up appointments for children in counties Carlow and Kilkenny; the wait time for assessments; the wait time for follow-up services; and the number of each type of therapist that have been reassigned to contact tracing for Covid-19.

Dear Deputy Funchion,

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

*I have examined the matter and the following composite response outlines the current position.*

The tables below outline the position in relation to therapy services in Carlow and Kilkenny.

**Table 1: Occupational Therapy (OT)**

OT Children's Services	No of posts in place (WTE)	Early Intervention (months)	School-Age Team (months)	Primary Care - Network 2 (months)	Primary Care - Network 3 (months)
Kilkenny	6	17	27	16	13
Carlow	5	20 approx.	20	21 approx.	

**Table 2: Speech & Language Therapy (SLT)**

SLT - Children's Services Carlow/Kilkenny	No. of posts in place (WTE)	No. waiting for assessment	Waiting time for assessment (months)	No. waiting for therapy	Waiting time therapy (months)
Primary Care (incl. disabilities 6-18 yrs)	9.1	310	12	929	32
Disabilities (0-6yrs)	5.1	72	11	137	28

**Table 3: Physiotherapy**

<b>Physiotherapy Children's Services</b>	<b>No of posts in place (WTE)</b>	<b>Nos. waiting under 5 years of age</b>	<b>Longest Waiting Times</b>	<b>Nos. waiting under 18 years of age</b>	<b>Longest Waiting Times</b>
<b>*Kilkenny</b>	Network 1: 4.8 Network 2: 2.3	25 (9 P1 & 16 P2)	P1 = 18 wks P2 = 38 wks	30 (7 P1 & 23 P2)	P1 = 3.6 wks P2 = 31 wks
<b>*Carlow</b>	Network 3: 3	12 (0 P1 & 12 P2)	P2 = 10 wks	30 (1 P1 & 29 P2)	P1 = 2 wks P2 = 9 wks

\*In terms of staffing children are seen across all networks but there are assigned posts for paediatrics in primary care so the caseload is seen as part of the general waiting list management.  
Priority 1 = P1 and Priority 2 = P2

In preparing for and responding to COVID-19 and to fully align with Public Health guidance as recommended via the NPHET, the HSE and its partner service providers put in place a range of measures. Effective redeployment of health service employees was a core element of the response in the HSE to COVID-19. Many grades and categories of staff including therapists were redeployed to other services such as testing, contact tracing, service support and other areas. Having said that, some services continued with therapists including speech and language therapists working with service users and their families remotely and using technology in new and effective ways.

The HSE has recently commenced a recruitment campaign for staff to support community testing facilities for COVID-19. Recruitment for these roles will support the return of staff who have been temporarily seconded to swabbing centres and contact tracing centres to return to their substantive roles. In the South East, the first recruited 9 Swabbing Staff commenced on 15th October 2020 and when they are trained /upskilled, it will facilitate the returned of staff members to their substantive posts.

As an interim measure the HSE has recruited staff via agency and are using also clinical staff when they are not rostered for their substantive posts. In addition the HSE is also seeking to return staff not fully returned to their substantive posts on a partial basis in order to support service recovery.

Across the South East, many therapists are now returning to their substantive roles with some continuing to partially work (on a rotational basis) on COVID-19 work or supporting the swabbing/testing at weekends. All Primary Care Occupational Therapy Services (including Paediatrics) have resumed and are being provided in line with public health guidelines and COVID-19 risk assessments. In resuming OT, SLT and physiotherapy services, guidelines on social distancing and infection control must be observed. Routine services have commenced over the last few weeks but at a reduced capacity in order to comply with Covid-19 measures. This has obviously impacted on waiting times in each service.

Please be assured that the OT, SLT and Physiotherapy Departments continue to monitor the waiting lists on an ongoing basis in the overall context of available resources and prioritisation criteria.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

  
**Jeanne Hendrick**  
**A/Head of Service-Primary Care**  
**South East Community Healthcare**