



2nd November 2020

Deputy Sean Sherlock,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 30789/20 To ask the Minister for Health if a mechanism in which families that are forced to go private for assessments and occupational therapy due to significant delays in the public system can claim money spent back will be introduced. Sean Sherlock

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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.

The HSE acknowledges the challenges in meeting the demand for access to services which support children's development and is acutely conscious of how this impacts on children and their families. However, the HSE does not have a budget available to support families to access private assessments and / or intervention while waiting for local HSE or HSE funded services.

Waiting times for assessment have been impacted negatively by the COVID-19 pandemic as staff were redeployed and face to face assessments stepped down for a period of time. In order to respond to the pandemic it was necessary to utilise existing staff through redeployment. It is anticipated that as new staff begin working in testing centres, this will allow many allied health professional staff, including Occupation Therapists to return to their posts.

A number of service improvements are being introduced that, when implemented, will help improve access to services for children with disabilities and developmental delays. The overall programme of improvement is the ongoing roll out of Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS). This requires the reorganisation of all current HSE and HSE funded children's disability services into geographically-based Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs).

The HSE is establishing Children's Disability Networks across each of the nine CHOs comprised of Specialist Multi-Disciplinary Teams to work with children with complex disability needs. Each Network will have a Children's Disability Network Manager with specialist expertise in providing children's disability clinical services. The appointment of these managers will facilitate the establishment of the Children's Disability Network Teams.

In August 2020 €7.8m was secured through Sláintecare to address overdue Assessments of Need (AON). This funding has been provided on a once off basis and is strictly time bound. This funding has been allocated to CHO

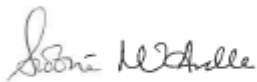
areas based on the numbers of overdue AONs at 30th June 2020. Each CHO area has developed a plan to address this backlog through a combination of

- Restoration of relevant clinicians to children's disability services
- Waitlist initiative utilising existing clinicians working overtime at weekends or evenings
- Procurement of private assessments
- Commitment to filling maternity leaves
- Recruitment of Additional Clinical Staff for fixed term contracts of 6 months from 1/9/20

The HSE is committed to the provision of timely access to therapy services for children including access to Occupational Therapy assessment and intervention.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Siobhán McArdle,
Head of Operations Primary Care,
Community Operations