



**Denis Naughten TD**  
**Dail Eireann,**  
**Leinster House,**  
**Kildare Street,**  
**Dublin 2.**

17<sup>th</sup> February 2021

**PQ 5349/21**

**“To ask the Minister for Health his plans to involve private optometrists in the provision of eye care for those awaiting appointments and treatment under the public health system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Denis Naughten”**

Dear Deputy Naughten,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 5349/21), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE has no plans at present to involve private optometrists in the provision of eye care for those awaiting appointments and treatment under the public health system. The HSE is working to ensure timely access to children and adults requiring ophthalmology services, and to reduce long waiting times for this important service. The HSE is committed to delivering efficient high quality ophthalmology services to all eligible service users. In full year 2020 a total of 59,951 children and adults were seen by HSE community ophthalmology clinics.

To address the current third wave of Covid infections there was a requirement to prioritise the level of services delivered during this period. Building upon the experience from earlier waves of the pandemic, Community Services have developed a prioritisation framework to support local decisions to be made on service prioritisation. This approach will ensure that services will be focused on identifying and supporting patients who have the greatest need and enabling staff to be deployed where necessary to support these patients. Where services are curtailed or reduced, this will be in line with clinical approval, a shared national position and with an appropriate risk assessment and communication with providers, service users and families. It is the intention of Community Services that full services would return as soon as is safe and practicable.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Naughten'.

**TJ Dunford**

Head of Operations; Primary Care.  
Community Operations.