



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

**Office of the Head of Operations,**  
Disability Services/Community Operations,  
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2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021

Deputy Mark Ward,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
e-mail: [mark.ward@oireachtas.ie](mailto:mark.ward@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Ward,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary questions, which were submitted to this department for response.

**PQ 56850/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of children waiting on a dietetics service; the average waiting time after the completion of an assessment of needs by CHO area; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**PQ 56865/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of children waiting on an ophthalmology service; the average waiting time after the completion of an assessment of needs by CHO area; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**PQ 56866/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health the average number of interventions received after a child is identified as needing an ophthalmology service after completion of an assessment of needs since their initial intervention in the first 12 months by CHO area in the past five years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**PQ 56879/21**

*To ask the Minister for Health the average number of interventions received after a child is identified as needing a dentistry service after completion of an assessment of needs since their initial intervention in the first 12 months by CHO area in the past five years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

The HSE acknowledges the challenges in meeting the demand for children's disability services and is acutely conscious of how this impacts on children and their families.

Ophthalmology, Dentistry and Dietetics services are provided mainly through Primary Care in CHO Areas to children and young people requiring assessment, diagnosis and treatment. Services for Ophthalmology and Dietetics may also be provided in acute services.

The information regarding the number of Assessment of Need reports completed since 2017 is provided in Table 1 below. The detail regarding the number of these reports that identified a requirement for Ophthalmology, Dentistry and Dietetics services is also provided in the tables below. This data is not available by CHO area.

The HSE does not collate data regarding the number of interventions received after a child is identified as needing an Ophthalmology or Dental services after completion of an assessment of needs.

HSE Disability Services does not gather data on the service provided through the acute hospital sector or primary care.

Year	AON Reports Completed	No. with identified need for Dietetics	No. with identified need for Ophthalmology	No. with identified need for Dentistry
2017	3660	102	120	21
2018	4237	67	79	8
2019	3312	93	68	20
2020	3911	102	55	6
2021	6204	129	57	1

Of note, children do not require an Assessment of Need under the Disability Act to access any health services including Ophthalmology, Dentistry and Dietetics services. Children requiring Ophthalmology, and Dietetics services would normally access such services via their GP or Primary Care services and Dental Services via their Dentist or Primary Care Dental Services.

Primary Care Services collects data on the number of children waiting on an Ophthalmology and Dietetics services and have provided us with this information.

Please see Appendix 1 - Table 2 Dietetics - Number of 0-17 years & 11 months old Patients waiting for treatment October 2021.

Please see Appendix 2 - Table 3 Ophthalmology - Number of 0-17 years & 11 months old Patients waiting for treatment October 2021

Primary Care and Disability Services do not collate information regarding waiting lists for Dental Services.

### **Progressing Disability Services for Children & Young People (PDS) programme**

A number of service improvements are being introduced that, when implemented, will help improve access to services including therapy services for children with disabilities and developmental delays.

The implementation of the Progressing Disability Services for Children & Young People (PDS) programme is agreed Government and HSE policy. This policy supports the reconfiguration of children's disability services across all statutory and non statutory organisations into Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) to provide equitable, child and family centred services based on need rather than diagnosis, where the child lives or goes to school. Each Community Healthcare Organisation are working with key stakeholders in their area including parents and education services to ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place to facilitate in-reach services to special school settings as appropriate to the needs of the children accessing services.

The Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS) model addresses the previous inequity in service provision whereby there may have been an excellent service for some children and little or no service for others. This variance may have been linked to diagnosis, age group or geography. Under the PDS programme children's disability services are changing from diagnosis based to needs based, so that all children with a disability or developmental delay have access to the right service based on their needs no matter where they live.

The National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay policy provides a single point of entry, signposting parents and referrers to the most appropriate service (Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children's Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties).

The HSE is committed to the full implementation of the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme (PDS). PDS is a significant change programme for the provision of services and supports for children from birth to 18 years of age, in line with Sláintecare and the Programme for Government, in order to:

- Provide a clear pathway and fairer access to services for all children with a disability
- Make the best use of available resources for the benefit of all children and their families
- Ensure effective teams are working in partnership with families and with education staff to support children with a disability to reach their full potential.

PDS aligns with two clear objectives of The Sláintecare Report to:

- Provide the majority of care at or as close to home as possible
- Create an integrated system of care with healthcare professionals working closely together.

### **Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs)**

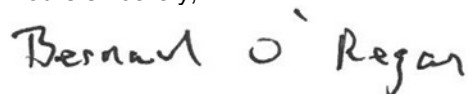
In line with the PDS model, resources assigned to children's disability services are allocated to 91 Children's Disability Networks (CDN) aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country and each Children's Disability Network will have one CDNT providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age. Early Intervention Teams and School Age Teams already in place are reconfiguring into birth-18 CDNTs. On full reconfiguration of children's disability services into CDNTs in December 2021, every child across the country with complex needs arising from their disability will have access to a CDNT

CDNTs are teams of health and social care professionals, including nursing, occupational therapy, psychology, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social work and others. The team works closely together in a family centred model, focusing on the child's and family's own priorities. Once all teams are in place, every child with complex needs will have access to a team, regardless of the nature of their disability, where they live, or the school they attend.

Children and their families will have access to the full range of services and supports of the CDNT according to their individual needs and available resources. This includes universal, targeted and specialist supports, such as individual therapeutic intervention and access to specialist consultation and assessment when needed. Supports will be provided as is feasible in the child's natural environments - their home, school and community.

Services in most parts of the country have now reconfigured to CDNTs. The remaining teams in will be established before the end of 2021 thereby all 91 CDNTs will be in place and delivering services at that time.

Yours sincerely,



**Bernard O'Regan**  
**Head of Operations - Disability Services,**  
**Community Operations**

## Appendix 1

Table 2

<b>Dietetics - Number of 0-17 years &amp; 11 months old Patients waiting for treatment October 2021</b>											
<b>CHO Area</b>	<b>0 - 4 Yrs 11 Months</b>					<b>5 - 17 Yrs 11 Months</b>					<b>TOTAL</b>
	<b>0 - ≤ 12 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;12 weeks - ≤ 26 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;26 weeks but ≤ 39 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;39 weeks but ≤ 52</b>	<b>&gt; 52 weeks</b>	<b>0 - ≤ 12 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;12 weeks - ≤ 26 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;26 weeks but ≤ 39 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;39 weeks but ≤ 52</b>	<b>&gt; 52 weeks</b>	
<b>CHO1 Total</b>	63	28	7	2	0	84	48	15	2	0	249
<b>CHO2 Total</b>	77	110	80	32	132	26	40	35	11	147	690
<b>CHO3 Total</b>	36	49	32	32	152	44	40	36	54	444	919
<b>CHO4 Total</b>	225	103	22	1	4	164	71	10	1	3	604
<b>CHO5 Total</b>	112	97	91	101	271	78	58	164	210	599	1,781
<b>CHO6 Total</b>	37	7	0	0	0	7	9	0	0	0	60
<b>CHO7 Total</b>	87	58	27	22	139	22	18	20	13	82	488
<b>CHO8 Total</b>	124	49	24	12	11	66	46	31	17	48	428
<b>CHO9 Total</b>	114	51	41	20	7	24	8	18	11	6	300
<b>National Total</b>	875	552	324	222	716	515	338	329	319	1,329	5,519



## Appendix 2

Table 3

<b>Ophthalmology - Number of 0-17 years &amp; 11 months old Patients waiting for treatment October 2021</b>											
<b>CHO Area</b>	<b>0 - 4 Yrs 11 Months</b>					<b>5 - 17 Yrs 11 Months</b>					<b>TOTAL</b>
	<b>0 - ≤ 12 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;12 weeks - ≤ 26 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;26 weeks but ≤ 39 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;39 weeks but ≤ 52 weeks</b>	<b>&gt; 52 weeks</b>	<b>0 - ≤ 12 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;12 weeks - ≤ 26 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;26 weeks but ≤ 39 weeks</b>	<b>&gt;39 weeks but ≤ 52 weeks</b>	<b>&gt; 52 weeks</b>	
<b>CHO1 Total</b>	135	132	76	37	104	123	67	65	64	207	1,010
<b>CHO2 Total</b>	291	552	485	626	2,214	201	306	190	169	1,092	6,126
<b>CHO3 Total</b>	86	96	31	20	65	258	165	115	49	355	1,240
<b>CHO4 Total</b>	252	204	98	87	294	181	353	173	158	957	2,757
<b>CHO5 Total</b>	312	130	90	83	597	194	94	37	47	51	1,635
<b>CHO6 Total</b>	60	13	0	0	0	90	4	0	0	0	167
<b>CHO7 Total</b>	95	132	54	128	501	99	88	13	45	287	1,442
<b>CHO8 Total</b>	413	116	60	50	351	293	79	32	19	932	2,345
<b>CHO9 Total</b>	39	0	0	0	0	77	0	0	0	0	116
<b>National Total</b>	1,683	1,375	894	1,031	4,126	1,516	1,156	625	551	3,881	16,838

