

Our Ref: PQ 50601/21

29 October 2021

**Deputy O'Sullivan**  
**Dáil Éireann**  
**Dublin 2**

**RE: To ask the Minister of Health if there are plans to outsource children for scoliosis surgery; his views on the wait times for scoliosis surgery; the number of children waiting in County Cork and if he will make statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy O'Sullivan

I refer to your recent PQ which has been forwarded to me for attention.

Children's Health Ireland is currently challenged to meet demand for scoliosis and orthopaedic operations due to a significant and ongoing loss of capacity during Covid-19, and more recently due to the HSE Cyber Attack, from which CHI hospitals have yet to fully recover. The scoliosis waiting times have significantly worsened as a result and this in turn has increased the frustration and anxiety of those children and families in the service awaiting assessment and treatment.

In response CHI has developed a plan and several initiatives to both restore pre Covid levels of theatre and outpatient capacity, in addition to addressing the backlog of waits that have built up during Covid 19. Some are already underway such as the joint initiative with Cappagh Hospital which since April 2020 has been providing additional outpatient and day case capacity. The HSE has recently approved funding to provide regular additional capacity in the independent sector and plans are underway to commence this initiative. CHI has also submitted a significant proposal to expand its theatre capacity in CHI at Crumlin and CHI at Temple Street and this is being considered by the HSE as part of the annual estimates process.

CHI sincerely regrets the deterioration in the service and the waiting times over this period and is making every effort to improve the service and the waiting times. It will continue to work with the Scoliosis Co Design and Advocacy Groups as it develops these plans.



Children's Health Ireland

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann (SLÉ), Herberton, Siúlán San Séamas, Rialto, D08 HP97, Éire  
Children's Health Ireland (CHI), Herberton, St James's Walk, Rialto, D08 HP97 Ireland

CHI works very closely with all our families and there is continued communication on updates and dates.

I trust this is of assistance to you.

Your sincerely

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**Joe Gannon**

**Chief Operations Officer**

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Our **Mission** is to: Promote and provide child-centred, research-led and learning informed healthcare, to the highest standards of safety and excellence. We will do this in partnership with each other, with children, young people and their families through a network of children's services in Ireland.  
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