



Oifig an Príomhoifigeach
Eagraíocht Cúram Sláinte Pobail Lár Tire,
An Lú, An Mhí

Oifig na bPríomhoifigeach, An Chéad Urlár,
 Coimhleasc Naomh Bríd, Bóthar Cheanannais
 Bhaile Átha Fhirdia, Co Lú, A92 DRN0

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27th July 2022

Deputy Fergus O’ Dowd
 Dáil Éireann
 Leinster House
 Dublin 2

Re PQ – Ref 36142/22 – To ask the Minister for Health the position in relation to the occupational therapy waiting list for children and separately for adults in County Louth; the number on the waiting list for each of the past three years; the number of occupational therapists and other staff employed each year by the HSE to provide this essential service; the protocols that are in place to find temporary cover either by direct hiring or contracting out the service to other providers if staff are on leave, have retired or left their position; and if he will make a statement on the matter – Fergus O’Dowd

Dear Deputy O’ Dowd,

The Health Service Representation has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to Deputy Fergus O’ Dowd for response. I have examined the matter and outlined the position as follows.

The below table provides dates on Staffing and Waiting Lists for the period requested:

June 2019 Staffing	June 2020 Staffing	April 2021 Staffing	June 2022 Staffing
Clinical Specialist - 0 Senior OT’s – 17.35 Staff Grade OT’s – 7.10	Clinical Specialist - 1 Senior OT’s – 17.55 Staff Grade OT’s – 8.80	Clinical Specialist - 1 Senior OT’s - 23 Staff Grade OT’s – 6.30	Clinical Specialist - 0 Senior OT’s – 13.85 Staff Grade OT’s – 2.80
June 2019 Waiting List	June 2020 Waiting List	April 2021 Waiting List	June 2022 Waiting List
0-5 Yrs. - 221 6-18 Yrs. - 531 18-64 Yrs. - 62 65 Yrs. + - 259	0-5 Yrs. - 190 6-18 Yrs. - 598 18-64 Yrs. - 57 65 Yrs. + - 354	0-5 Yrs. - 194 6-18 Yrs. - 491 18-64 Yrs. - 99 65 Yrs. + - 466	0-5 Yrs. - 172 6-18 Yrs. - 590 18-64 Yrs. - 115 65 Yrs. + - 641

Since December 2019, the Occupational Therapy service has incurred an increasing level of staff resignations. At April 11th 2022, all five posts (4 wte) assigned for Louth Primary Care Pediatric services are unfilled (four vacant and one maternity leave); two



of the permanent vacancies, i.e. staff resignations occurred recently (Feb & April 2022), and a maternity leave commenced in April also.

In the years leading-up to the Covid-19 Pandemic, this service was already challenged, with demands outweighing capacity, significant vacancies and recruitment issues. The impact of the Pandemic between March 2020 and February 2021 impacted waiting lists as the service was naturally limited in capacity to offer new appointments, due to COVID-19 related restrictions, staffing redeployments, and building access restrictions.

As a result, there now exists a large volume of lengthy waiting lists as outlined above.

Midlands Louth Meath Community Healthcare Organisation is experiencing recruitment challenges at this time, right across the organisation. This is particularly impacting on the Louth Primary Care Pediatric Occupational Therapy service. The CHO has sought to fill Pediatric staff vacancies from existing panels and via agency without any success.

We are reviewing all options to address current vacancies as quickly as possible. A new recruitment campaign for Occupational Therapy posts was advertised on 7th June. We also advertised in Northern Ireland as part of the campaign. It is hoped that we will secure replacement appointments from this campaign with interviews planned for late August 2022. However, new staff are unlikely to be appointed until late Q4, 2022.

I trust the above is in order but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Des O'Flynn', written over a horizontal line.

Des O'Flynn
Chief Officer
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation