

29th March 2022

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2
E: marylou.mcdonald@oireachtas.ie

Re: PQ 13641/22 – National Gender Healthcare Steering Committee

“To ask the Minister for Health the status of each recommendation made by the National Transgender Healthcare Steering Committee in 2020; the progress on the implementation of each recommendation; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy McDonald,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question seeking an update on the recommendations made by the National Gender Healthcare Steering Committee in 2020, which has been referred to the Ireland East Hospital Group for direct response.

I have had this matter examined and am advised that Service development is ongoing at the National Gender Service.

In 2018, additional funding for staff was approved based on an increase in referral rates between 2014 and 2017. A number of new staff were recruited in 2019 following approval of the 2018 business case. In 2019, a Clinical Lead was appointed. A Clinical Governance structure was put in place by the National Gender Service team in 2019 and multiple quality improvement initiatives have been implemented by the staff at the National Gender Service since then.

These developments are ongoing but ongoing service development is threatened by a mismatch in demand and capacity. Since 2018 there has been a further increase in referral rates. Between 2014 and 2018, the average annual referral rate was approximately 200 per year. It now exceeds 300 per year but does appear to be stabilising. While referral rates now seem to be plateauing, demand for the National Gender Service continues to exceed capacity.

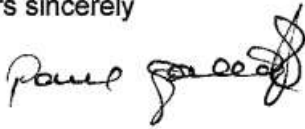
Given the further increase in demand since 2018, the waiting time for initial assessment continues to increase as demand continues to exceed capacity. This has caused significant distress as people are waiting longer and longer for an appointment. Current waiting times are approaching three years and will continue to increase in the absence of additional investment.



To reduce waiting times, the National Gender Service has submitted business cases for additional staff and clinical space that will meet the increase in demand. These business cases rest within the Acute Hospital and Mental Health Divisions of the HSE. Decisions on these business cases are pending. If these business cases are approved, then the National Gender Service will proceed to recruitment and will reduce the waiting list to a matter of months rather than years. If they are not approved, then waiting times will continue to increase.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Paul Gallagher
Chief Director of Nursing and Midwifery