



**Cúram Sláinte
Phobail, Iarthar**
ag freastal ar Ghailimh,
Maighéo agus Ros Comáin

**Community
Healthcare West**
serving Galway, Mayo
and Roscommon

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14th September 2022

Seán Canney
St. David's
The Mall
Tuam
County Galway

PQ 44424/22

To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that children in County Galway who have eyesight issues and who are entitled to an annual eye examination at Tuam primary care centre are being refused on the basis of lack of capacity; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Canney,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

There are issues with the recruitment and retention of Ophthalmology staff in Community Healthcare West and this is most acute in county Galway where the two permanent Ophthalmologist posts have been vacated in the past year. No children are being refused eye care that they are entitled to however there is a significant waiting list in the East Galway area due to staffing shortages.

In an effort to address the capacity issues in the Community eye service HSE management have put in place a number of measures as follows;

1. One Permanent Consultant Ophthalmologist post has been approved for Galway and the campaign is about to move to interview stage. The successful appointee will also provide a service to the Tuam site.
2. Recruitment of clinical Optometry staff for Galway - interviews have been completed for this position. This will provide a significant increase in the capacity of the service in Galway. These posts are new development posts for the eye service and are in line with the Primary Care Eye Services Review Report (April 2017) which recommended the formation of Integrated Primary Care Eye Teams comprised of multidisciplinary team members including Optometrists. The

addition of these posts in the Community will free up the Community Ophthalmologist's clinical time to be more appropriately used seeing urgent cases more expeditiously.

3. Commencement of strategy to manage Paediatric waiting list for those children who are aged over eight years of age with the introduction of an Over 8's discharge scheme in Community Healthcare West. This scheme launched in County Galway on 1st August and packs are being issued to qualifying children currently advising them of their entitlement to a free eye test at an optician of their choice if they meet certain Discharge Criteria as follows:
 - Stable level of vision
 - Only require annual refractive review and no acute medical eye issue
 - Aged 8-12 (in primary school)

It is anticipated that these measures should assist in addressing the current acute capacity issues in Community Ophthalmology in county Galway,

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Mary Warde
Head of Primary Care
Community Healthcare West