



Eagraíocht Cúram
Sláinte Pobail
Tuaisceart Chathair &
Tuaisceart Chontae
Baile Átha Cliath

Community Healthcare
Organisation
Dublin North City &
County

Ceannasaí Seirbhíse Cúram Príomhúil,
Eagraíocht Cúram Sláinte Pobail
Tuaisceart Chathair & Tuaisceart Chontae
Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Saoráid Cúram Sláinte Bhaile Munna,
Bhaile Munna, Baile Átha Cliath 9, DO9 C8P5.

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Head of Service Primary Care,
HSE Community Healthcare Organisation
Dublin North City & County,
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Mr Cian O'Callaghan, TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

16th May 2023

PQ 18449/23 – *“To ask the Minister for Health the action he will take to tackle the waiting lists in the primary care service for children's disability services for example, psychology, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy in the north Dublin area CHO9; the length of the waiting lists for these services in the primary care service; his advice for parents who may be waiting upwards of three years for an initial appointment; his plans to shorten these wait times to ensure children are assessed in a timely manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter”* – **Cian O'Callaghan TD**

Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

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

Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City and County (CHO DNCC) are working hard to reduce waiting times across the CHO.

The waiting list is negatively impacted by a growing number of referrals due to increased population and a lack of ability to recruit staff in Dublin North City and County. We are working hard to address these issues utilising rolling recruitment campaigns, attending recruitment fairs and making the application process locally, as easy as possible to navigate.

There are 2,431 children waiting for a Primary Care Psychology assessment in CHO DNCC with the waiting time on average being 45 weeks. The demand for Primary Care Psychology services in CHO DNCC has grown 40% since 2019, as a result of increasing need at community level and changes to the threshold to access supports in secondary care and specialised paediatric services. We have streamlined our Primary Care Psychology services over the past number of years as well as moving to offering hybrid attendance models to improve accessibility to core services. A service improvement initiative has been established including staff recruitment and retention initiatives aimed at improving access to services for children waiting longer than 52 weeks. This has contributed to 1,363 children being moved off the waiting list in 2022. It is estimated 1,000 additional children will be seen in 2023. Psychology advice clinics providing immediate support to children and families waiting for the service have been established with nine running per fortnight across the CHO DNCC. Low intensity interventions, such as parent information workshops are also offered to support children waiting for individual appointments who have non-complex needs. CHO DNCC are currently running a waiting list initiative with development funding and have benefited from the introduction of the new Psychology Assistant grade to address the waiting lists. Psychology Assistants increase the capacity to the service by delivering interventions as outlined above.

The number of children waiting for their Primary Care Occupational Therapy (OT) assessment in CHO DNCC is 2,394 with an average wait time of approximately 18-24 months. The OT Service are looking at a new service model which will create a tiered approach that has provided some success at reducing waiting times in other primary care services nationally. OT continue to work on improving access and have introduced a series of measures, including a waiting list validation exercise, access to advice clinics for parents or guardians of children who are waiting to access the service. In conjunction with the new service model outlined above, additional resources have also been approved as part of the ongoing implementation and rollout of Sláintecare and once all posts have been filled, it is anticipated they will have a positive impact on the waiting times.

Currently there are 2,511 children on the waiting list, from this 116 children have been waiting longer than 12 months. One of the main issues associated with increasing waiting times is the lack of availability of staff. We are working hard with our HR Colleagues to fill vacancies as soon as they arise and have created local panels where possible to reduce delays when appointing new staff. SLTs are engaging in cross cover throughout CHO DNCC to ensure standardised waiting times are maintained. There is a consistent focus on managing the waiting lists to ensure waiting times are comparable.

Please see attached advice clinic flyers for further information as outlined above.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Tom O'Brien
Head of Service Primary Care