



Mr Alan Farrell TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

14th March 2023

PQ 10026/23 - *“To ask the Minister for Health how many children are waiting for their primary care SALT initial appointment in the CHO9; and if he will make a statement on the matter”* - **Alan Farrell TD**

Dear Deputy Farrell,

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

Please see below a breakdown of the Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City and County (CHO DNCC) primary care speech and language therapy (SLT) waiting list.

Waiting time	0-4 months	4 months & 1 day- 8 months	8 months & 1 day - 12 months	12 months & 1 day - 18 months	18 months & 1 day - 24 months	24-30months	Total Waiting
Children waiting	777	767	598	100	10	8	2,260

A number of factors have contributed to the above waiting times, including a rapidly growing population. The service also has a broad scope, covering children with a wide range of speech, language, stammering, voice and social communication needs. To manage the demand for service group therapy is provided when clinically indicated. This facilitates seeing as many children as possible at the same time, whilst best meeting their needs. The National Access Criteria has been implemented and children with a disability but deemed to have non-complex needs can now access services within primary care. This has led to an increase in demand for services and for one to one therapy.

Difficulties in filling vacant posts also contribute to the waiting lists.

In order to help reduce the waiting time for children, we have taken the following actions:

- Consistent focus on the timely filling of all vacancies, as soon as they arise. Newly created CHO DNCC local senior panel and staff grade national panel.
- Cross-cover where vacancies exist, aimed at equalizing waiting times across the area.
- Use of temporary contracts to back-fill temporary vacancies.
- Re-introduction of groups, in line with IPC guidelines.
- Consistent focus on managing the waiting lists at each clinic, network and across network level to ensure waiting times are comparable. SLT Managers are working with Community Health Network Managers to manage waiting lists and waiting times.

A new initiative has been introduced in CHO DNCC whereby, parents of children under 3 now receive a phone call within approximately two months of receipt of a referral and the child is placed on an appropriate early intervention

pathway. Early intervention communication groups are offered to children for whom this is clinically indicated within 6-8 months of receipt of referral.

Advice clinic appointments with individualised advice is available to clients waiting for intervention in CHO DNCC. An information leaflet is sent to all parents of children who stutter and are on the waiting list.

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,



Vanessa Fitzgerald
Acting Head of Service Primary Care