



Children's Health Ireland

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann (SLÉ), Herberton, Siúlán San Séamas, Rialto, D08 HP97, Éire
Children's Health Ireland (CHI), Herberton, St James's Walk, Rialto, D08 HP97 Ireland

Ref: PQ 9027/23

13th March 2023

Deputy Denis Naughten
Dáil Eireann
Dublin 2

Dear Deputy Naughten

I refer to your recent PQ which has been forwarded to me for attention.

PQ 9027/23: To ask the Minister for Health the hours during which the critical care retrieval service for children is currently available; the reason this does not operate on a 24/7 basis; the alternatives that are in place when this service is not available; if there are plans to extend this to a 24/7 service the hours during which the critical care retrieval service for children is currently available; the reason this does not operate on a 24/7 basis; the alternatives that are in place when this service is not available; if there are plans to extend this to a 24/7 service; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Response:

National Ambulance Service (NAS) Critical Care and Retrieval Services (CCRS) for critically ill children are provided by a specialised paediatric critical care team known as IPATS: Irish Paediatric Acute Transport Services. This is a partnership between the NAS and Children's Health Ireland (CHI). It is staffed by paediatric critical care nurses, Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) and Anaesthesiology Consultants and Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHD's) from CHI at Crumlin and Temple Street, and Paramedical staff from NAS-Cherry Orchard.

IPATS operate between 10am and 8pm Monday through Sunday. However, there are unfortunately periodic gaps in service delivery due to staff shortages arising from staff leave (maternity), difficulty in securing locum cover, and recruitment challenges.

The reason the service does not operate on a 24/7 basis is due to the phased planning of the service expansion. The service began as a 5 day per week in 2014 and extended to a 7 days per week in 2021. It is planned that the service will become 24/7 to coincide with the opening of the new National Children's Hospital. This target is to synergise with key staff member availability when all PICU services are located on one site.

The service funding envelope is provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) for the NAS and CHI to recruit and employ the requisite staff members for this service, alongside an additional Level-1 complex child transfer service.



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The NAS-CCRS have encountered challenges in the planned development into the service which may delay the roll-out of the full service as planned. These are (but not limited to):

1. A generally challenging recruitment environment for medical, paramedical staff and nursing staff at all levels
2. Highly specialised skillset required for Paediatric Critical Care Retrieval, where there is a world-wide shortage of this workforce
3. Extensive discussions with CHI on consultant working models and recruitment schedule, advanced nurse practitioner model, NCHD working model

NAS CCRS are committed to delivering this service in full as soon as it is both feasible and sustainable.

Yours sincerely

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