

2nd February, 2023

Ms Holly Cairns, TD.,
Dáil Eireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 2446/23

To ask the Minister for Health the current state of feeding / eating / drinking / swallowing impairments FEDS pathways for assessment and treatment in CHO4.

Dear Deputy Cairns,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

In Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CHO 4) children with feeding, eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties (FEDS) needs and risks are referred, assessed and treated through the Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs). FEDS needs and risk are highlighted through the referral intake meeting, initial assessments with clinicians, Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) goals or through communication update from a school, PHN or consultant. Parents can also inform the staff in the CDNT of FEDS needs and risks if child is on the CDNT caseload. There is a prioritisation process for FEDS based on clinical risk and need.

FEDS referrals are assigned to a Speech and Language Therapist, who may liaise with Occupational Therapy/ Physiotherapy in relation to positioning and/ or gross motor function and also dietician or medical staff. Following assessment and provision of recommendations a child is re-prioritised in terms of their current feeding, eating and drinking difficulties. An onward referral may be made for specialist support if required. CDNT can make referral to an acute hospital if medical support is needed around FEDS. Currently there is no dietetics posts on CDNT's , however with NSP funding 2022, three Senior Dietician posts are in the recruitment process.

FEDS cases are prioritised based on clinical need relating to dysphagia. High risk cases are screened as soon as possible. Cases of restrictive or limited diet that not involve dysphagia are waitlisted until multidisciplinary team support, including OT and psychology resources can be supplied to support these complex needs.

Additionally, the West Cork Children Disability Team operate a network wide multidisciplinary FEDS clinic. It moves from area to area (x 4) within the geographic area. One clinic is held in each area 3 - 4 times a year depending on needs identified.

If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Ms. Majella Daly,
Head of Disability Services,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare