



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta
Géaroibríochtaí

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Deputy David Cullinane
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

3rd August 2023

PQ 35059/23 - To ask the Minister for Health to outline what actions he and the HSE have taken and will take following the publication of a report from the Office of the Ombudsman for Children titled scoliosis treatment for Ivy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -David Cullinane

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) have advised of the following most relevant actions that CHI have completed, or are in the process of completing to implement the recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children report.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Action Plan to address the Office of the Children's Ombudsman recommendations regarding the effectiveness of the HSE multi-disciplinary planning process by CHI Temple Street in providing scoliosis treatment to a named child from 2016 to 2021.

Due to changes in the governance arrangements over the time covered by this review the accountability for delivery of the action plan will rest with Children's Health Ireland, led by Clinical Directorate A rather than CHI at Temple Street.

Recommendation 1

As provided for in the refreshed National Outpatient Waiting List Management Protocol 2022, we recommend that CHI at Temple Street undertake an audit of the waiting list for children's scoliosis care, to be assured that the data and information is current, up to date and valid.

CHI Responses and actions

Validation is the process whereby patients on a waiting list are contacted to confirm if they are available, ready and willing to proceed with their hospital care. The inpatient and day case waiting list for spinal surgery is not routinely clinically validated as a standalone exercise as there is regular contact between Clinical Nurse Specialists within CHI and the parents of children waiting. Parents can contact the Clinical Nurse Specialists at any time regarding queries on their medical condition, equipment needs, pre-operative assessment, timeline to surgery and more.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
1.	Clinical Nurse Specialists and medical secretaries to be given clear written guidance on escalation processes if waiting list concerns (including clinical deterioration) are raised with them.	Complete

Given that this waiting list has not been routinely validated CHI do not believe that an audit of this process would be of value. Children's Health Ireland (CHI) acknowledge that in the case in question formal clinical validation would have assisted in providing certainty regarding the clinical plan for this patient. In order to improve this going forward Children's Health Ireland will establish a formal process for capturing contacts between clinical team members and families as they occur. This formal record will include details on the nature of any queries, response provided and actions undertaken. At 6 monthly intervals these records will be cross checked with

the waiting list for spinal fusion. Any families which have not made contact, during this period will undergo validation at that point.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
2.	Develop formal record and action process for capturing contact between family/patient and nursing and non-clinical team members regarding updates or concerns in clinical condition.	Complete
3.	Formalise process to cross check spinal fusion waiting list with contact record every six months.	Complete

Recommendation 2

As proposed in the “Waiting List Action Plan 2022” we recommend that CHI at Temple Street reform the process wherein reviews of patient care can be initiated by the patient/family/caregiver/GP or other professionals involved in the patient’s care. This should ensure an integration of information from any of these sources about a child’s deteriorating condition while waiting for treatment and ensure this is clearly communicated and understood. It may be helpful for CHI at Temple Street to engage with the HSE Deteriorating Patient Improvement Programme in this regard.

CHI responses and actions

Patient Safety is of utmost priority in Children’s Health Ireland and we acknowledge that processes to ensure children remain safe while waiting are essential. The new processes to support clinical validation will also assist in ensuring that there is

effective and timely response to any deterioration experienced by children waiting for treatment.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
	See Action 2 above	

In addition to this, patient information materials will be developed to enhance awareness on points of contact for support within the Orthopaedic service and also to advise on steps to take if a parent or guardian is concerned about their child's condition.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
4.	Update/ formalise CHI patient and family information materials regarding contact routes for scoliosis service concerns or clinical queries.	Open – initial completion date 30 th June 2023. Update as of 02 nd August - short life working group established. Proposed completion 20/10/23.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that this investigation statement be shared with the HSE and the Scoliosis Co-Design Group so that any learning from Ivy's case can form part of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the MDT pathway for paediatric scoliosis care and the protocol for transition of adolescent patients to adult services.

CHI Responses and actions

CHI fully agrees that all learning should be shared with the HSE and all advocacy groups.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
5.	CHI will share both the investigation statement and action plan with the Scoliosis Co-Design groups.	Complete

CHI will also provide progress updates on the improvement actions at our meetings with the advocacy groups.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
6.	Add update to this action plan as a standing agenda item to Advocacy Group meetings until all actions are completed.	Open – and agreed as agenda item. The next co design meeting for scoliosis advocacy is late September 2023 (date to be confirmed by chair).

CHI will also ensure that the learning from this investigation is shared with all teams involved in further developing transition pathways to adult services in spinal services.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
7.	Ensure Learning from this investigation is formally shared with all members of the Clinical Directorate responsible for developing transition plans to adult spinal services	Complete

Recommendation 4

We recommend the HSE National Quality Assurance Directorate undertake an audit of the complaints handling policy and practices at CHI Temple Street to include a review of how concerns are identified and reported onto hospital management and the HSE.

CHI Responses and actions

CHI became a new organisation in January 2019 involving the integration of three different organisations and governance systems. In March 2022, Patient Complaints for CHI at Temple Street transitioned to the CHI Patient Feedback and Support Service (PFSS). This is the department in CHI which oversees Complaints Management as part of the Quality, Safety and Risk Management (QSRM) function.

Since this change in governance, CHI can confirm there has been a substantial restructure and redesign of the Complaints Management Team and processes across CHI. Key Performance Indicators, Standard Operating Procedures, line management structure, data reporting and escalation processes have been reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with relevant standards and guidelines.

On receipt of the OCO draft recommendations, the Patient Feedback and Support Service (PFSS) have reviewed all access related complaints for the Orthopaedics Department in CHI at Temple Street. There are currently no open complaints relating to access to orthopaedic surgery or appointments which pre-date the PFSS transition in March 2022. All open complaints have been reviewed and CHI are satisfied that the response process is compliant with the HSE guidance 'Your Service Your Say'.

CHI are satisfied that all new complaints now received regarding access to the Orthopaedics Service in CHI at Temple Street, are also responded to in accordance with the "HSE Management of Service User Feedback Policy for Comments, Compliments and Complaints" and escalated accordingly within CHI.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
8.	Review all open complaints relating to spinal services in CHI to ensure that they are being managed in line with expected quality standards	Complete
9.	Escalate all closed spinal orthopaedic complaints to the CHI Director of QSRM for the next six months to ensure quality processes are working as intended	Open - on-going until October 2023
10.	Provide report of open and newly closed spinal service complaints to the fortnightly orthopaedic meetings	Complete

Recommendation 5

We recommend that CHI Temple Street undertake a review of the Multi-Disciplinary Team process introduced in February 2022 to be assured of its effectiveness in coordinating and planning for patient care.

CHI Responses and actions

Actions taken to safeguard quality and safety are normal practice in healthcare and are ultimately in the best interest of the children and young people we treat. In order to ensure we maintain good standards of quality, safety and best practice in our service, Children's Health Ireland has requested an external clinical review of complex Spina surgeries carried out on a small group of children with Spina Bifida over the past 3 years.

The review will involve expert clinicians in spinal surgery from a North American Hospital of excellence examining our practices, procedures and patient outcomes in relation to Spina Bifida spinal surgery with a view to advising whether there are any patient safety-related issues and whether improvements to our services are required.

This review is now in progress and CHI can confirm that MDT processes will be included in the review and that any recommendations arising from this will be addressed.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
11.	Ensure that planned MDT process is occurring on the intended schedule	Complete
12.	Ensure that the external Review of Clinical Outcomes in Complex Spinal Surgery in Children with Spina Bifida (October 2019 - October 2022) at Children's Health Ireland at Temple Street Hospital is fully supported to completion and any recommendations relating to MDT operation are actioned.	Open –anticipated to be completed by end of September 2023.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that CHI should offer to re-engage with Ivy and her parents. The purpose of this should be to demonstrate an understanding of the learning that has been taken from this matter and to advise of the changes in practice with regard to the handling of concerns and complaints by parents and children.

CHI Responses and actions

Children's Health Ireland will be arranging to meet with Ivy in person to discuss the outcome of the investigation and acknowledge the learning. This action plan will be provided in advance of the meeting and CHI would like to discuss this in more detail with Ivy in addition to answering any further queries she may have.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
13.	Set up meeting with patient, and parents if the patient wishes, to discuss the investigation outcome and action plan.	Complete

Recommendation 7

We recommend the Board of CHI formally consider whether the findings of this investigation and outcomes of the recommended audit and review are relevant to children waiting scoliosis treatment within their other services

CHI Responses and actions

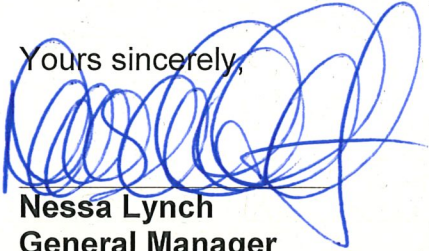
As a single, and integrating organisation, CHI are committed to ensuring that the standards and quality of service are consistent across all sites. Learning from this investigation and subsequent actions will be actively shared with CHI at Crumlin and the National Orthopaedic Hospital, Cappagh, which are the other two national locations which manage scoliosis waiting lists.

Action identifier	Action detail	Action status
14.	Provide a report on this investigation and the CHI-wide actions arising from it to the	Complete- reported on 4 th July

	Board Quality and Patient Safety Committee	
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I trust this is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Nessa Lynch
General Manager
Acute Operations