



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

4th April 2023

PQ 14397/23 – *“To ask the Minister for Health the number of children in the Dublin Fingal constituency waiting on speech and language therapy through their local primary care centres; 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.

The table below table outlines the waiting list data for speech & language therapy. Total Assessment refers to the number of children who have not seen a Speech and Language Therapist and are awaiting an assessment appointment. Total Initial Therapy refers to children who have had their assessment and are now awaiting their first therapy sessions. Total Further Therapy refers to children who have had their assessment and initial therapy sessions and are now waitlisted for further therapy sessions.

No of Children on Speech & Language Therapy Waiting Lists in Dublin Fingal							
Waiting Time	0-4 mths	4 mths & 1 day- 8 mths	8 mths & 1 day - 12 mths	12 mths & 1 day - 18 mths	18 mths & 1 day - 24 mths	24-30mths	Total Waiting
Total Assessment	324	374	388	33	1	0	1120
Total Initial Therapy	208	197	199	176	116	0	896
*Total Further Therapy	327	355	329	307	47	8	1365

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 service scope has broadened, covering children with a wide range of developmental needs following implementation of the National Access Policy.

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. There is a newly created Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City and County (CHO DNCC) local senior panel and staff grade national panel for SLT staff.
- Providing cross cover to equalise resources across the Fingal Network within CHO DNCC.
- Use of temporary contracts to back-fill temporary vacancies.
- Re-introduction of group therapy, in line with Infection Protection Control (IPC) guidelines.

- Consistent focus on managing the waiting lists at each clinic, network and across network level to ensure waiting times are comparable. Speech and Language Therapist (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 three 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 six to eight 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 and is attached for reference.

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