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25th September 2023

Deputy Catherine Murphy
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

PQ 37937/23 - To ask the Minister for Health the current state of feeding eating-drinking-swallowing impairments pathways for assessment and treatment in CHO7 and CHO9.

- Catherine Murphy

Dear Deputy Murphy,

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

In Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow (DSKWW) children with feeding, eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties (FEDS) needs and risks are referred, assessed, and treated through the Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT's).

FEDS needs and risks are highlighted through the referral intake meeting, initial assessment with clinicians, Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) goals, or through communication updates from school, Public Health Nurse (PHN), or consultant. Parents can also inform the staff in the CDNT of FEDS needs and risk if their child is on the CDNT caseload. There is a prioritisation process for FEDS based on clinical risk and need. FEDS cases are prioritised based on clinical need relating to dysphagia. High-risk cases are screened as soon as possible.

FEDS referrals are assigned to a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) who may liaise with Occupational Therapy (OT)/Physiotherapy in relation to positioning and/or gross motor function and also a dietician (where available). 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.

The current state of feeding eating-drinking-swallowing impairments pathways for assessment and treatment for Older Persons in Community Nursing Units in DSKWW is via a referral by nursing staff to Speech and Language Therapy Services in Primary Care.

The Health Service Executive can confirm the Primary Care Speech and Language Service (SLT) provide a feeding, eating, drinking and swallowing service. Referral is through General Practice, Hospital, or other Primary Care Team members. Referrals are prioritised upon receipt based on need.

In Community Healthcare Organisation for Dublin North City and County (CHO DNCC), the following outlines the pathways for assessment of feeding eating-drinking-swallowing (FEDS) impairments:

Dieticians, nursing professionals and Speech and Language Therapists (SLT) provide interventions to this group.

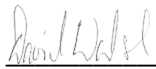
Dietitians provide a service for adults with FEDS impairments who have been referred by hospital Dieticians. Clients also access this service through referrals from other Primary Care Clinical professionals including GP's, Psychologists, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists.

SLT provide a service for those aged 17 years 11 months and older. The SLT service provides assessment, intervention and management of feeding, eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties. The profile of clients includes but is not limited to; adults with FEDS difficulties post stroke; secondary to acquired neurological illness such as Parkinson's disease, Motor Neurone Disease (MND), Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP) and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Other conditions include neurological ataxias; age-related illness and dementia profiles and respiratory illnesses; head and neck cancer; other oncology diagnosis and general medical illnesses contributing to FEDS difficulties. The Paediatric SLT service in CHO DNCC Primary Care holds a small caseload of children with oropharyngeal dysphagia and sensory feeding needs.

If on assessment of a patient, a Public Health Nurse (PHN) or Community Registered General Nurse (CRGN) has concerns related FEDS impairments a referral is sent to the SLT and Dietetics Departments in CHO DNCC. Patients displaying FEDS impairments in hospital, can be referred to the PHN on discharge.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



David Walsh
National Director
Community Operations