



Head of Service Primary Care

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Ms Emer Currie TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
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Email: emer.currie@oireachtas.ie

PQ 20546/25 – *“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the average waiting time between initial assessment and the commencement of therapy intervention within speech and language therapy services in the CHO9 area; and if she will make a statement on the matter”*
- **Emer Currie TD**

Dear Deputy Currie,

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.

Integrated Health Areas (IHA) Dublin North County and Dublin North City & West Primary Care Speech and Language Team (SLT) have advised current average waiting time for initial SLT assessment and the commencement of therapy intervention in this area is 27 months. This is due to a substantial increase in referrals to the service and a number of vacant posts.

We apologise for the inconvenience caused and greatly appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through this. In the meantime:

- Families offered appointments with advice clinic for guidance and support while awaiting the assessment/therapy.
- SLT Pilot Scheme has commenced in IHA Dublin North County where a prioritised assessment for children under 3 years and subsequently prioritised therapy for language needs are identified on that assessment
- All children identified as stammering are sent an information booklet while on the waiting list for therapy. All children identified as stammering are also flagged from the first point it is known i.e. referral or following assessment/therapy/parent informing the team. They are then waitlisted initially for this pathway. This is considered a first step in therapy, providing specific information to parents on
 - How to support their children who are stammering,

- How to talk to other adults in the child's life, including teachers about stammering
- Practical ideas for beginning to work on supporting their children at home.

These are live sessions, delivered virtually, where parents can get advice about their specific circumstances and ask questions. These parents will later be offered an assessment appointment and if required, later a therapy pathway, but this is considered therapy for the parents that attend.

- There is a Selective mutism pathway which is where a child who is able to speak cannot speak in certain situations or to certain people. All families of children identified as referred with selective mutism are sent a letter and an information booklet, with specific advice to support their children at home. The letter signposts the families to a UK website which has advice and information, including a free online training course for parents and teachers.
- Management are investigating the possibility of setting up:
 - Tiered approach
 - Prioritisation

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,

Michelle Forde
Head of Service Primary Care
HSE Integrated Health Areas of Dublin North County and
Dublin North City & West