



Oifig an Stiúrthoir Cúnta,
Cúram Priomhúil Rochtain agus Comhthathú,

Seomra 243, Ospidéal Dr Steevens,
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30th September 2025

Deputy Cullinane
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 44669/25 To ask the Minister for Health if there is a method for accessing ophthalmology care for children on waiting lists in cases where there is no ophthalmologist currently employed.

Additional Information provided: "This is related to every region"

- David Cullinane

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 44669/25) which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Eye care services are delivered through a number of complementary disciplines working in tandem to meet the needs of patients. Ophthalmologists provide medical and surgical expertise, while orthoptists, optometrists, and ophthalmic nurses play an essential role in assessment, monitoring, and treatment within community and hospital-based services. Together, these professionals form an integrated eye care pathway for children and adults.

Where a public hospital or community service is without a directly employed ophthalmologist, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has a range of measures in place to ensure that children can continue to access appropriate care:

- Interim cover provided by locum or agency ophthalmologists, pending the recruitment of a permanent specialist;
- Arrangements with private providers under the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to facilitate access to assessment and treatment for children on waiting lists, where clinically appropriate;
- Referral to alternative clinics within the region where ophthalmology services are available;
- Ongoing input from orthoptists and optometrists in community settings to provide assessment, follow-up, and management of non-surgical cases.

Individuals may also choose to access the Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme, which enables patients to receive publicly funded planned healthcare in Northern Ireland, subject to meeting the relevant eligibility and clinical criteria.



The HSE continues to work closely with regions to strengthen paediatric eye care services, reduce waiting times and ensure continuity of care through targeted recruitment, service reconfiguration and the ongoing development of multidisciplinary eye care teams. In urgent cases, children are prioritised to ensure timely access to care. As always, if there is an immediate concern about sight then attendance at an Emergency department may be necessary.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Seán McArt
General Manager
Primary Care Access & Integration