

7th August, 2024

Ms. Holly Cairns, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 31205/24

"To ask the Minister for Health the number and exact wait times of children and adolescents waiting less than 12 months and in excess of 12 months for the north Lee, south Lee, north Cork, west Cork and Kerry primary care physiotherapy services; and the number of clients waiting two years, three years, four years, and so on, in tabular form."

Dear Deputy Carins,

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.

The Community Paediatric Physiotherapy Service has a number of vacancies at present and any new physiotherapists taking up post require experience in this specific field of clinical expertise and to concentrate on this area of practice.

Referrals are prioritised as they are received with priority given to babies under 18 months who are referred for concerns regarding their gross motor development that might impact at a later stage on the acquisition of fine motor skills such as speech; hand development and coordination. Interventions for this cohort are time sensitive for this group due to the rapid acquisition of skills in the average baby/toddler/child. Based on this, there are a few waiting categories and those who are impacted least by lack of paediatric physiotherapy input wait longer on the waiting list. Referrals to a paediatric physiotherapy have increased year on year, with complexity also increasing secondary to the set-up of Childrens' Disability Network teams (CDNTs) whose threshold for complexity has increased.

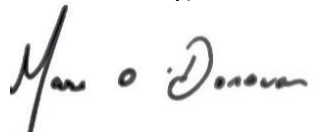
The below table outlines waiting times as requested above.

| | Numbers waiting by LHO | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Wait Times | North Lee | South Lee | North Cork | West Cork | Kerry |
| < 12 mths | 377 | 340 | 84 | 78 | 153 |
| 1 - 2 years | 255 | 187 | 44 | 0 | 30 |
| 2 - 3 years | 160 | 149 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 - 4 years | 54 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 - 5 years | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

I acknowledge that this timeframe for such a service is less than desirable, and I apologise for same. This is as a consequence to a number of factors including a growth in demand for services and also the implications of resource deficit due to the present recruitment embargo. Efforts to increase resources throughout and reduce waiting times are indeed our top priority. We are actively working on strategies to address resources allocation, validation of waiting lists, streamlining processes and optimising existing workloads, ultimately working towards providing timely access for all to services.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mari O'Donovan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and 'O'.

Mari O'Donovan
Acting Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare