

2019.06.18

16 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the publication of waiting lists for healthcare services: (OQ.165/2019)

Further to his response to Written Question 262/2019, will the Minister commit to publishing waiting lists for healthcare services, breaking them down by speciality and distinguishing between routine and acute, or emergency, procedures when doing so?

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

In Health and Community Services, we are undertaking significant work on our data around waiting lists. Currently, we publish average waiting times on gov.je by speciality for, firstly, patients seen in an outpatient clinic at the hospital, or at Overdale for their first appointment; and, secondly, patients being admitted to the hospital for an inpatient, or day-case, procedure. The purpose of the work we are doing is to provide assurance about the management of our waiting lists and this will involve the development of a patient-tracking list and we will publish that further data as and when we have it developed and are in a position to do so. This will include a breakdown by clinical priority, that is to say whether the case is urgent, or soon, or routine, for patients referred to consultants in secondary care and patients admitted for a procedure, for example, a cataract operation, as referred to in the Deputy's written question. The question also asks about acute and emergency procedures, but these would not be reported, or added to waiting lists in the same way, because, of course, they are patients who need an operation urgently, or in the immediate future, for example, for a life-threatening situation.

3.16.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

There are 2 types of waiting, one is for a reference to the consultant and that might take some time and the second is from that consultant to delivering some procedure. Does the Minister accept that a range, for example, of minimum wait 2 weeks to a maximum wait of 48 weeks, with an average of 18 weeks, is fairly meaningless? Would he agree to publishing not the median waiting times, but the mode waiting time, i.e. the most frequent, which would give a better idea of how efficiently the hospital is working in this area?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

When I came into office, waiting lists were not published and I made a commitment to publish the data as it was collected at the time. There has been significant work carried on to try and improve that data and it continues. Yes, at the moment it is the case that we publish a mean wait and sometimes outliers do look astonishing, because there can be all sorts of reasons why there is a maximum wait. It could be that the clinical priority is not great, or it could relate to the demand, or could relate to the number of operating slots available. But they can also relate to patients who cancel their appointments, or do not attend, or can carry on with what they are dealing with and choose not to have it at a certain time, which pushes their wait further. Yes, in some respects a mean wait does not reflect the usual experience of patients and we are undertaking significant work to provide far greater information in the future.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Minister for his reply.