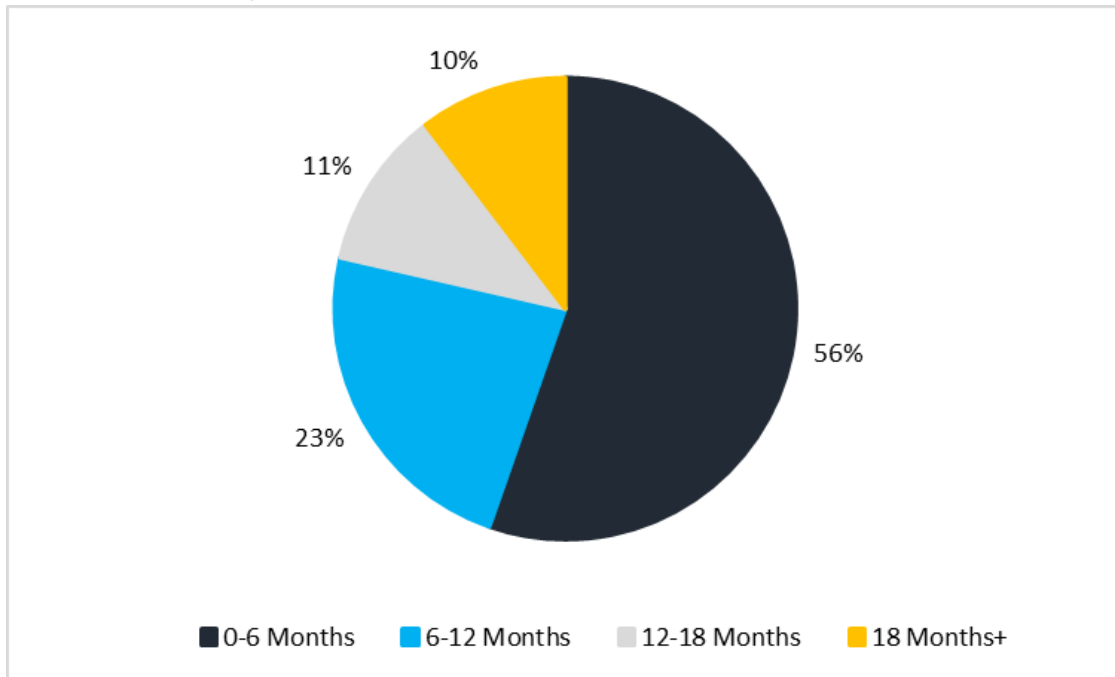


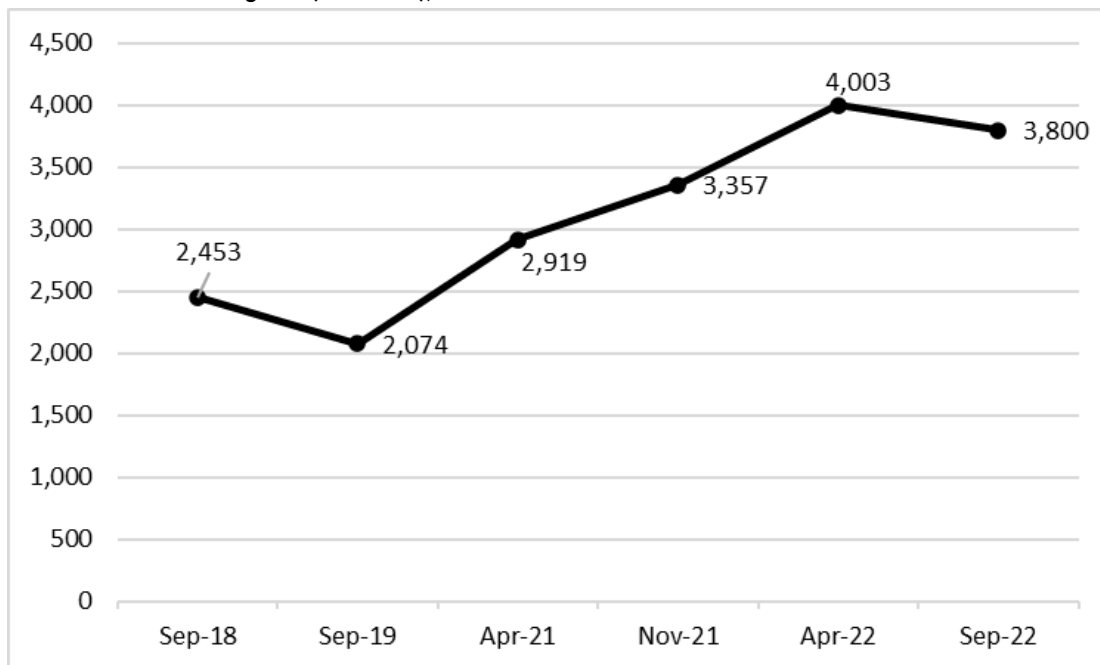
Health

Chart 2.1: Outpatient Waiting Lists, Child, July 2023



Source: www.ntpf.ie

Chart 2.2: Number on Waiting Lists (all 9 CHOs), CAMHS 2018-2022



Source: Mental Health Commission (2023): Independent Review of the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the State by the Inspector of Mental Health Services, p.16.

Health

A recent Report from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child¹ commended Ireland on the introduction of selected policies concerning children. However, the Committee voiced serious concerns about children's access to healthcare in Ireland and about children's mental health services in particular.

Access to Healthcare

Budget 2023 extended the provision of free GP care to children under 8. This was a welcome initiative, however, more needs to be done to ensure that adequate numbers of GPs are available to meet demand, particularly in rural areas.

In July 2023, 85,622 children were waiting for outpatient care.² Of these, more than 1 in 5 were waiting for 12 months or more, and more than 1 in 10 were waiting 18 months+ (Chart 2.1).

Child and Adult Mental Health

The establishment of a specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) was committed to in a national policy from 2006 and while, ostensibly, this is now in place, there have been service deficits, delays and problems with staffing, funding and implementation in this area for many years. An Independent Review of the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the State, published by the Mental Health Commission³ highlighted that children and young people with open cases

in mental health services have been "lost" in follow-up care. In one Community Healthcare Organisation it was found that there were 140 "lost" cases within the CAMHS team. In some of these cases, there was no appointment for up to two years. The report also indicated poor monitoring of medication, long waiting lists and poor staff conditions. As of September 2022, according to the report, 3,800 children and adolescents were awaiting service provision (Chart 2.2).

Disability Assessments

Another area of concern relates to delays in assessments of need for children with disabilities. The Ombudsman for Children's Office highlighted the adverse effects that delays in obtaining assessments and corresponding services are having on children's health and development. It reports that in June 2022, some 2,531 assessments were outstanding, while over 17,000 children in Ireland were awaiting a first contact from a Child Disability Network Team (CDNT) at the end of May 2022.⁴

Policy Priorities

- Invest in the full implementation of Sláintecare and increased primary care.
- Invest in the provision of increased GP services to support the commitment to free GP care for children under 8 announced in Budget 2023.
- Increase resources for assessments of children with disabilities.
- Increase funding for CAMHS.

² www.ntpf.ie

³ Mental Health Commission (2023): Independent Review of the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the State by the Inspector of Mental Health Services.

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/un-child-rights-committee-publishes-findings-azerbaijan-bolivia-ireland>

⁴ <https://www.oco.ie/library/plan-for-places-forward-planning-for-the-provision-of-schools-places-for-children-with-special-educational-needs-a-childrens-rights-issue/>