

## **Connaught Telegraph**

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### **Mayo children cannot even access waiting list - Chambers**

Children in Mayo cannot even get on to the waiting list for children's physiotherapy services Fianna Fáil Deputy Lisa Chambers told the Dáil.

“The first line of the health section in the Programme for Government refers to access to timely care, which is laughable in a context of waiting lists exceeding 680,000,” she said. “We have 662 children (in Mayo) who qualify for paediatric physiotherapy, of whom 270 are currently getting services, with waiting times of up to 137 weeks for treatment. I am quoting from the response I received on this. There are 392 children wait-listed due to staffing deficits while a further 97 children cannot even get onto the waiting list.”

Deputy Chambers said she was told that any capacity available on the part of the remaining 2.8 whole-time equivalent staff is devoted to those caseloads left open by vacancies and that it is not possible to estimate waiting times for new referrals.

“We have the bizarre situation that we do not even have a waiting time for 97 children in one county,” she said. “If we cannot even get to grips with the waiting lists we have, what are the Taoiseach's plans and those of his Minister for Health to deal with those children who cannot even get on to a waiting list?”

In response, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said he would ask the Minister for Health to respond to the Deputy in detail.

### **Lack of political leadership a real problem for the West of Ireland**

Deep concern about the apparent failure of Apple to proceed with a data centre in Athenry, as was originally planned two or three years ago, was expressed in the Dáil by Green Party leader Eamon Ryan.

“Effectively, we cannot build anything in this country now as we have lost the public and part of the reason is a lack of political leadership, as the Citizens' Assembly indicated,” he said.

This is a real problem for the West of Ireland when it means this flagship project will not go ahead, he said. “It comes on the back of us already saying we will not build out the grid to the West of Ireland as it is a politically difficult decision. I know it is tough but that has consequences. Sometimes we must stand up to the public and be honest. We know nobody wants to build out the grid and it is not easy but if we pull back, as we have done, there will be consequences for Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo and Donegal.”

Dublin, he said, is packed with data centres and there are no problem getting them because there is a grid and other infrastructure. “If we do not provide the underlying infrastructure, the West will not develop and that is what happened because Fine Gael was asleep on

watch,” he said. “It stood back from the responsibility to provide infrastructure that would have allowed fibre cables and grid connections that allow modern industries to form.”

In response, Minister of State Pat Breen said the Taoiseach visited the US recently and met senior management from Apple. “He made it clear that the project has the full support of our Government and of the local community in Athenry,” he said.” He also stressed that Ireland is a country that values and supports technological investment like that being proposed in this case. Members, including the Deputy, will recognise that this is ultimately a commercial decision for the company to make. We know such decisions can be informed by a range of different factors but we will continue to encourage Apple to proceed with the data centre project in Athenry.”

### **“Golden Circle” still in operation**

It is very clear from the Paradise Papers that the golden circle is absolutely still in operation, Sinn Féin Senator Rose Conway-Walsh told the Upper House.

“Fianna Fáil set it up and Fine Gael has continued on with it,” she said. “The illusion that is given year after year that tax loopholes are closed down is just not true.”

She said she was absolutely amazed recently to hear a Fianna Fáil Deputy on radio state that he could not say whether Fianna Fáil supported Apple in respect of the €13.5 billion it has been asked to return to the State to put into an escrow account. “He could not tell if Fianna Fáil was for Apple giving back the tax or against it, nor if it was supportive of the Irish Government, which it is propping up, in taking this case against the EU,” she said. “The other thing I found astounding was that, while trying to stress the importance of foreign direct investment which is very important, the same Deputy said, ‘remember we have no natural resources’. He actually said that. I am not surprised. He was probably speaking on the basis that Fianna Fáil gave away all our natural resources.”

Fianna Fáil, she said, then told the company that took the resources from the people that it did not have to pay tax for at least 20 years, just as the banks have been told now. “People in County Mayo and rural Ireland who listened to that would ask what in the name of God is going on in terms of our natural resources and the tax avoidance.”