



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
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7<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Deputy Pat Buckley TD  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2.

PQ 17382/19 Question: To ask the Minister for Health the procedure when a patient under 18 years of age presents to an emergency department following self-harm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Pat Buckley

Dear Deputy Buckley,

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. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Where a person under 18 years presents to the Emergency Department following self-harm it is important that person receives a compassionate empathic response from the ED staff. They should receive a biopsychosocial assessment from a suitable qualified mental health professional prior to discharge from hospital. In children under 16 years of age it is recommended they should be admitted overnight to a paediatric ward. The paediatric team should ensure the child receives a biopsychosocial assessment prior to discharge from hospital. This recommendation follows international best practice such as NICE recommendations in the UK.

At present, due to differing levels of staffing for CAMHS teams around the country there is an inconsistent response for children in the EDs. In some hospitals the child will be assessed by a Non Consultant Hospital Doctor, who can then discuss the case with the CAMHS consultant on call. In other services, there may be no CAMHS Consultant on call and the paediatric team will be advised to wait until the CAMHS consultant is available.

Liaison Psychiatry teams are available in the 3 Dublin Paediatric Hospitals. In Temple Street Childrens University Hospital this service is provided in conjunction with the local mental health service for 24 hours, 7 days a week. In Crumlin and Tallaght Childrens University Hospitals, the liaison psychiatry service is available Monday to Friday 9-5. Outside those hours children are assessed by the paediatricians and admitted to a paediatric ward.

In Cork University Hospital, there is a liaison psychiatric nurse available Monday to Friday 9-5. This

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nurse is supported in her work by a Consultant from CAMHS. Out of hours an NCHD completes assessments and the CAMHS consultants provide input.

Children who self-harm will receive a full biopsychosocial assessment, however, due to lack of adequate funding for CAMHS teams or specialists in Dialectical behaviour therapy services it can be difficult to arrange appropriate follow up care for these children.

The National Clinical Programme is relying on the local CAMHS teams to implement the Clinical Programme in their areas. In Dublin, 1 extra Clinical Nurse Specialist in each of the children's hospital will improve the response, but the follow up care and non ED emergency services will depend on full staffing of CAMHS teams.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sinead Reynolds'.

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Dr Sinead Reynolds  
General Manager Mental Health Services