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17th December 2019

Deputy Louise O'Reilly,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 51623/19 - To ask the Minister for Health the reason it is necessary for applicants for psychotherapist posts to hold a social science degree and a degree in psychotherapy to qualify for psychotherapy posts.

-Louise O'Reilly

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

Under the Section 22 of the Health Act 2004 the HSE has the authority and responsibility to establish and declare professional, educational and experience requirements for appointment to posts in the HSE. Patient safety is paramount in the HSE's decision making process employed in establishing the essential criteria for each post.

Counsellors and psychotherapists are not yet subject to statutory regulation, unlike many other Health and Social Care Professions, but are scheduled for regulation by CORU. The HSE understands that CORU will regulate these two professions as two distinct professions. The HSE welcomes this development as it will provide the necessary safeguards for service users.

Unlike other Health and Social Care Professions there is no one single professional body or an accepted and agreed education pathway to professional accreditation between the proliferation of representative bodies and educators. The DoH noted in 2006 that the "diversity of therapies, proliferation of training bodies and representative organisations and the lack of statutory regulation were the main impediments for making clear recommendations about promoting counselling and psychotherapy in mental health and primary care services".

This fragmented situation still exists today with the creation of additional professional associations compounding this difficult environment in advance of planned statutory regulation by CORU.

The requirement for a dual level of qualification for appointment as a Counsellor /Therapist in mental health services and the National Counselling Service is in alignment with what is required in the psychological services and was deemed to be the safe standard required due to the complexity of the issues presented, especially by victims of childhood abuse, and the fragmented and unregulated environment of counselling and psychotherapy that continues to exist.

In declaring the essential criteria for psychotherapists the HSE is mindful of the Strasbourg Declaration on Psychotherapy of 1990 (Please see attached below), and draws on the standards set by the Training Accreditation Committee, TAC, of the European Association for Psychotherapy, EAP. The European Certificate of Psychotherapy (ECP) was established by the EAP to create a comprehensive European wide standard for psychotherapy education and training.

The standard for qualifying training set by the TAC for the Accreditation of Training Institutes sets out the qualifying training programme for psychotherapists. These standards stipulate that training is spread over 7 years and consists of a primary qualification "First 3 years of general training in human sciences (medical, psychological, social, educational, etc.) or equivalence" and a "minimum of 4 years of training in a specific modality".

In setting the criteria for the role of Counsellor /Therapist in mental health services and for posts in the National Counselling Service, the HSE requires eligible applicants to have undergone accredited training that conforms to the European standard as set out below.

1. Statutory Registration, Professional Qualifications, Experience, etc

(a) Eligible applicants will be those who on the closing date for the competition:

(1) Hold a qualification at Level 7 or higher on the QQI framework in a human science discipline (medical, psychological, social, educational) or hold a qualification at Level 7 or higher in a health and social care profession.

PLUS 2A OR 2B

(2) A (i) Hold a degree or post-graduate qualification in counselling, or psychotherapy recognised by one of the following, as appropriate:, the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP), or one of the five sections within the Irish Council for Psychotherapy (ICP)

And

(2) A (ii) Have full accredited membership with one of the following: IACP or one of the five sections within ICP. Pre-accredited hours must include a minimum of 100 hours of one to one counselling/psychotherapy with adult clients under the supervision of an IACP / ICP accredited supervisor.

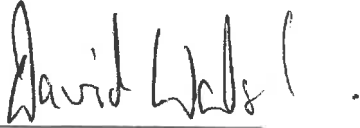
Or

(2) B (i) Are a full member of the Clinical or Counselling Psychology Division of the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI).

In setting these requirements the HSE, given the diversity of therapies, the proliferation of training bodies and representative organisations, has adopted an acceptable European standard in the absence of statutory regulation in the interest of service user safety and quality of professional service.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



David Walsh,
National Director,
Community Operations

Strasbourg Declaration on Psychotherapy of 1990

In accordance with the aims of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the non-discrimination accord valid within the framework of the European Union (EU) and intended for the European Economic Area (EEA), and the principle of freedom of movement of persons and services, the undersigned agree on the following points:

Psychotherapy is an independent scientific discipline, the practice of which represents an independent and free profession.

Training in psychotherapy takes place at an advanced, qualified and scientific level.

The multiplicity of psychotherapeutic methods is assured and guaranteed.

A full psychotherapeutic training covers theory, self-experience, and practice under supervision. Adequate knowledge of various psychotherapeutic processes is acquired.

Access to training is through various preliminary qualifications, in particular human and social sciences.

Strasbourg, October 21st, 1990