



16th July 2019

Deputy John Curran, TD
Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

PQ: 28988/19

To ask the Minister for Health the assessment being made of the need for the development of specialist services to meet the needs of older persons with long-term substance use issues

Dear Deputy Curran,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

The success of the OST programme has resulted in numbers of individuals with Opioid Dependence living longer and this is reflected in the changing age demographic of those in receipt of OST. At the end of May 2019 there were 3253 individuals over the age of 45 years receiving OST in Ireland and of these 69 were over the age of 65.

The service has evolved and is dealing with the issues emerging with an older cohort of individuals on OST. These include a more complex medical presentation involving more chronic medical conditions such as hypertension, respiratory disease and musculoskeletal conditions. In addition when older people present, each case is dealt with individually through the care and case management framework where individual's needs are assessed and a care plan is developed to respond to identified needs. The implementation of this care plan often involves other services such as Acute Services, Care of the Elderly, Public Health, Hepatology and Palliative Care.

In the context of the National Drug and Alcohol strategy, action 2.1.23 states that in order to improve the response to this cohort, work examining the need for the development of specialist services to meet the needs of older people with long term substance use issues is required. Currently, a piece of research is being scoped out to look at the concerns and issues in relation to planning and developing services for this cohort. This research will build on an information gathering exercise on the issue of an ageing population of drug users and will be commissioned in CHO 3 in 2019.



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 that reads "Eamon Keenan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Eamon Keenan
National Clinical Lead – Addiction Services