



Oifig an Straitéis Chúraim Phríomha agus an Phleanála
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02nd August, 2019.

Deputy Brendan Howlin, T.D.,
Dail Eireann,
Kildare St.,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Howlin,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your Parliamentary Question below which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

PQ Ref:- 30348/19 “To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of extending access to the counselling in primary care service to all 16 to 25 year olds; and if he will make a statement on the matter.” -Brendan Howlin

The Counselling in Primary Care Service is for people with mild to moderate psychological difficulties. It is a short-term counselling service that provides up to 8 counselling sessions with a professionally qualified and accredited Counsellor/Therapist. It is a service for medical card holders, who are 18 years of age or over, and who want help with psychological problems that are appropriate for time limited counselling in primary care.

The service is suitable for people who are experiencing certain difficulties such as depression, anxiety, panic reactions, relationship problems, loss issues and stress.

Since its launch in May 2013, the number of referrals has grown to an average of 1,500 each month in 2017. GPs are the largest referrer group in CIPC accounting for roughly 90% of all referrals. CIPC is undergoing a comprehensive national evaluation and thereupon provide the results to the general public, service users, GPs, HSE stakeholders and policy decision-makers and funders.

There are several objectives to the evaluation:

- Examining clients' clinical outcomes in order to report the effectiveness of the CIPC service.
- To investigate the impact of short-term counselling on GPs' prescribing of psychotropic medication to CIPC clients once therapy has concluded.
- To gather and examine quantitative and qualitative feedback from all GPs who have referred patients to the service.
- To provide a set of recommendations to inform the future direction of CIPC based on its commitment of continuous evaluation for the improvement of the service for clients.

The report demonstrates the positive impact that counselling can have in the lives of so many people who are experiencing common mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression. For 97% of clients who took part in the research, counselling was effective in reducing their distress. Counselling was also effective for those clients identified as being at risk, with significant reductions in the level of risk at the conclusion of counselling. Evaluations of the type described in this report and the subsequent phases of research are essential to help ensure service-wide



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quality improvement. The ambitious CIPC National Evaluation will inform the future planning of counselling in primary care settings and pave the way for the health service to make counselling accessible to all Irish people.

Services are provided to medical card holders, who are 18 years of age or over (34% of the total population) with an associated spend of €6.8m in 2019. Assuming that current referral rates and access times remain the same and being cognasint that the completion of the evaluation will inform the future of the model of service, it is estimated that to provide services to the full population at the current level would require an additional allocation of €13.3m bringing the total required to €20.1m

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'G. Crowley', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Geraldine Crowley,
Assistant National Director,
Primary Care Strategy and Planning**