



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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**Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin,  
Dail Eireann  
Dublin 2.**

33338/19

To ask the Minister for Health the waiting times involved from when a child in care requiring psychological assessment is referred from TUSLA to the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. –Fiona O'Loughlin

Dear Deputy O'Loughlin,

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.

CAMHS is a specialist service that provides assessment and treatment to children and young people who are experiencing mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders and psychosis. Some conditions treated in CAMHS include moderate to severe depression, anxiety, eating disorders and self-harm. It is secondary service for young people and usually requires a referral from a professional e.g. GP. There are 70 community child and adolescent mental health teams in place across Ireland. Not all young people experiencing mental health difficulties will need the specialised services of CAMHS. Those with mild to moderate conditions are treated ordinarily by GPs and by other professionals who work in the community e.g. psychologists. A GP is always a point of contact and can advise young people or parents and guardians on what other services might be available in their local area. The HSE also funds 13 Jigsaw locations across the country to provide one to one counselling, community awareness and intervention services through training and workshops. Additionally young people can be referred to psychology services in primary care.

There are two types of referral; an urgent referral and a routine referral. Every effort is made to prioritise urgent referrals so that young people with high risk presentations are seen as soon as possible and this can often be with 24- 48 hours. All CAMHS Community Mental Health Teams screen referrals received and those deemed to be urgent are seen as a priority which can impact on seeing other individuals. Severity of the symptoms reported affects waiting times where waiting times for those with high risk presentations are shorter. This may impact on wait times for cases that are considered, by a clinician, to be less severe.



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CAMHS wait lists are impacted by capacities in other parts of the system particularly primary care psychology, and disability services. Increasing access to mental health supports for young people at primary care level will ensure that specialist mental health services can concentrate on those who present with moderate to severe mental health difficulties.

Nationally HSE mental health services do not collect data on waiting lists for individual disciplines including psychology.

A recent initiative aimed at improving early intervention for young people with emerging and mild mental health difficulties by enhancing primary care psychology services through the employment of assistant psychologists resulted in 114 assistant psychologists recruited to primary care with an additional 20 psychologists also recruited to provide supervision and guidance. These posts are designed to ensure that young people whose clinical needs are at primary care level receive appropriate intervention and do not end up on secondary care waiting lists due to lack of appropriate assessment and resources in primary care.

HSE Primary Care has developed a computerised cognitive behaviours therapy (cCBT) called eWell for young people 12-18 Years. The eWell intervention is a 6-session cCBT programme for young people presenting to HSE Primary-Care with mild to moderate depression and/or anxiety. Designed by the HSE, working in collaboration with the Mental Health Reform (MHR) & HSE Service Users for the past 4 years and more recently Reachout Ireland. The aspiration is that this program will empower service-users to develop a Mental Health skill-set, whereby users acquire skills that will increase self-awareness, coping strategies and psychological resilience. A significant advantage to this programme is the accessibility - this intervention is available 24/7 from any location.

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

Yours sincerely,

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Sinead Reynolds  
General Manager Mental Health Services