

04/07/2019

**Deputy James Browne**  
**Dail Eireann**  
**Dublin 2.**

**PQ Number: 26410/19**

**To ask the Minister for Health the position regarding the national eating disorder plan and its key actions; and if he will make a statement on the matter**

Dear Deputy Browne,

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

Eating disorders are Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Binge Eating Disorder and ARFID. Although it has been estimated that 188,895 Irish people will experience an eating disorder at some point in their lives, recent research indicates that this number is rising particularly for adolescents (Micali 2013). Most people can and do get better from eating disorders with effective treatment. The most effective treatment setting is in dedicated community based eating disorder services, where multidisciplinary teams have specialist training to provide evidence based care and treatment.

Anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality and morbidity risk of all the mental health disorders (Arcelus 2011), and a small number of people benefit from additional more intensive treatment through day programmes or inpatient care e.g. when they are medically unstable/ comorbidity etc. Comorbidity can be physical as well as psychological, so an integrated care approach is essential between primary care, mental health and hospital. Carer burden is very high, in addition to the psychosocial and economic cost for the person themselves, who are often relatively young at onset.

In response to this issue, the HSE prioritised and developed a National Clinical programme for Eating Disorders. A National Model of Care for Eating Disorders was published in Jan 2018 in partnership with College of Psychiatrists' of Ireland and Bodywhys. This aims to establish a network of 16 regional community based specialist eating disorder teams (8 CAMHS and 8 Adult) across the country services serving populations of approximately 400,000 or greater and work in integrated partnership with existing health services.

The first 2 dedicated teams started operations in April/May 2018 serving CAMHS and adults across CHO6/7/8(part of). These multidisciplinary teams provide specialist eating disorder outpatient and limited day programmes at present, as well as consultation services. Over 60 new service users benefited from their services in 2018. A third CAMHS ED team for CHO4 is still in recruitment and commenced a limited clinical



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.  
T 01 6207304 R: [Sinead.reynolds@hse.ie](mailto:Sinead.reynolds@hse.ie)  
Mental Health Service  
St Loman's Hospital, Palmerstown Dublin 20  
Tel: 01-6207304 Email: [sinead.reynolds@hse.ie](mailto:sinead.reynolds@hse.ie)

service in May 2019. Additional Programme for Government funding was received in 2018 and 2019 to commence the next hub teams in the Model of Care. Unfortunately, recruitment of the experienced clinicians from the wider mental health service to these teams has been hampered by the national recruitment process and the non backfilling of clinicians appointed from within the service. Access to suitable office/clinical space to work from is also a significant limiting factor in development of services, particularly the day programmes.

The National Clinical Programme has continued to deliver an ambitious interprofessional training and education programme for its specialist eating disorder clinicians and has put in place structures for long term clinician supervision and support. We continue to work with other clinical programmes and Bodywhys across primary care, medicine, emergency medicine and paediatrics to develop integrated care pathways, improve service user experience of services and manage their needs, access and safety. In 2019, we are developing an Active Waiting resource pack and APP for service users/ carers, a LIBGUIDE to support clinicians, and an electronic database for service evaluation.

We also continue to partner with Bodywhys (the national support service in Ireland for people with eating disorders and families) to support their range of services for service users and carers. By Jan 2019, 613 carers had completed their 4 week PILAR course at 15 different locations across the country, with great feedback in the formal evaluation with UCD which we launched in Feb 2019.

Initiatives aimed at reducing the waiting list, as outlined in previous responses continue.

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

Yours sincerely,

Sinead Reynolds  
General Manager Mental Health Services