



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
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1st May 2019

Deputy James Browne TD
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

PQ 11705/19 *To ask the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of extending eligibility for the counselling in primary care service to all adult general practitioner card holders. James Browne*

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.

The Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) service was established in July 2013 to provide counselling for patients experiencing mild to moderate psychological difficulties who present in the primary care setting. All adults in receipt of a medical card are eligible for the service. Access to this service is by referral from the client's GP or a member of the Primary Care Team. All clients referred to CIPC are requested to opt into the service before they are allocated to a counsellor and an appointment is then offered. Under Section 58 of the Health Act 1970 (as amended) the HSE can make available a GP visit card to eligible persons. This card enables eligible persons to visit a participating GP free of charge. No other health or social services, such as counselling, are provided by this card. As of 01 February (latest figures available), 506,283 individuals hold eligibility for a GP visit card. This figure also includes GP visit cards which are provided on a discretionary basis.

In line with the Sláintecare recommendations the HSE NCS welcomes the further expansion of the CIPC service for example to include those who hold a GP Visit Card. Such an expansion of CIPC needs to consider both direct and indirect costs associated with increased service provision to all adult DVO card holders. Extending eligibility of the CIPC service to an additional population of 506, 283 individuals would increase the rate of referral by an estimated 33%.

Currently, CIPC receives an average of 19,000 referrals each year. It is estimated that increasing access to those holding GP visit cards would increase the rate of referral by a minimum of 6,300 people per year (based on current average referral rate to CIPC from GMS card holders which is 3 times that of GP visit card holders).

Estimating the cost of expansion of the CIPC service needs to take account of direct costs, payment for counselling sessions provided as well as indirect costs associated with essential service infrastructure needed to facilitate counselling sessions to take place (e.g. accommodation from which to provide counselling, supervision



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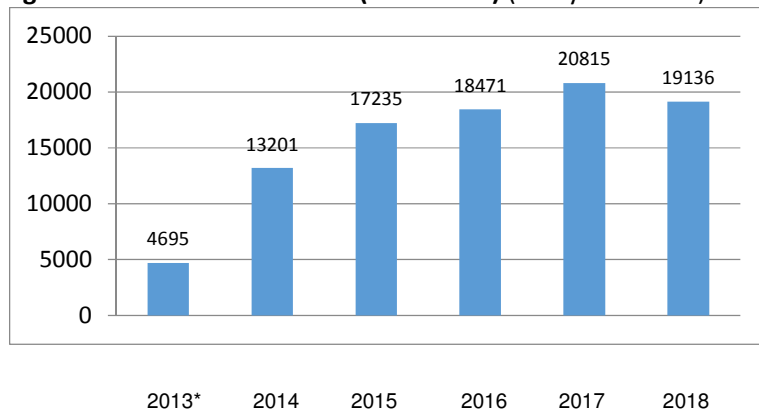
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of counsellors etc.). An annual budget of €6m was allocated to CIPC when it was established in 2013. There has been no additional financial investment since that time (allocated budget 2018: € 6,038,474).

The CIPC service is experiencing significant strain in terms of service infrastructure which has not developed in tandem with demand for the service (see figure 1 which shows referral rates since 2013).

Figure 1: No. Referrals CIPC (2013-2018) (* July-Dec 2013)



An investment plan is required to address current infrastructure deficits so that expansion to GP Visit card holders can take place. Investment required for CIPC service infrastructure includes:

- Physical: additional suitable accommodation from which to provide counselling
- Business support: additional administration staff to process referrals etc. [minimum 10 required]
- Clinical governance: senior Counsellor/Therapists to clinically supervise counsellors [minimum ten required]

These costs are in addition to the direct cost of counselling sessions. See table 1 below for direct and indirect costs of CIPC expansion. These are a estimate of the minimum costing to roll out such an expansion effectively. A more detailed costing would require more detailed analysis.

Table 1: Direct and Indirect costs of CIPC Expansion to DVO card holders

Direct & Indirect Costs of CIPC Expansion to GP Visit Card Holders	€
Counselling Sessions (based on an estimated additional 6,300 referrals per year)	2,000,000
10 Senior Counsellor/Therapists @ 88,000	880,000
10 additional administration staff [Grade IV] @ 34,049	340,490
Accommodation [average cost of renting one additional premises per CIPC service]	300,000
Training and equipment	100,000
Total Estimated Cost	3,620,490



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Estimated full year cost of extending eligibility for the counselling in primary care service to all adult general practitioner card holders: €3,620,490

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, appearing to read 'Sinead Reynolds'.

Dr Sinead Reynolds
General Manager Mental Health Services