

13th March 2019

Deputy Pat Buckley, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 12418/19

“To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the high demand for dialectical behaviour therapy access in the north Lee area of County Cork and the surrounding areas; and his plans for supporting access in this area further in view of the fact that there is currently no psychologists providing the therapy in the area.”

Dear Deputy Buckley,

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.

Since the North Lee Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (Endeavour) Programme was established in 2010, demand for places on this resource intensive programme has always been high. However, in May 2018, clinical demand for the programme significantly exceeded capacity to provide places on the programme. Specifically, 53 people had confirmed their interest to remain on a waiting list for Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) while all places on the programme were full. At that time, the staff resources available to the team had decreased however the number of referrals to the programme continued to increase. As the service did not want to create an expectation regarding service delivery that we did not have the resources to deliver clinically, it was decided that the waitlist would be closed and added to our service risk register.

Since May 2018, Management and Clinicians have actively problem solved to effectively reduce this waiting list. Solutions have included negotiating for additional therapists to join the team; and offering screening appointments to individuals on the waiting list (to determine suitability for the programme and to signpost people to alternative interventions, as appropriate). These factors, along with consistent hard work and commitment from all members of the team, have resulted in us now having offered screening appointments to everyone on the list and having significantly reduced the number of people on the waiting list. Six people, who have been screened and deemed suitable, are awaiting a place. In view of this progress, the waiting list re-opened on the 6th March and the service is accepting referrals from Community Mental Health Teams and home based treatment teams across North Lee.

The service continues to maximise utilisation of the clinical resources available. Currently, there are 18 individuals availing of the full DBT programme (2.5 hours skills training group per week, one hour individual therapy per week, phone coaching as required) and a further 6 individuals are engaged with the pre-treatment phase of the programme. Additionally, 9 individuals are participating in the Understanding and Managing Emotions (U&ME) programme, which is a skills only programme (2.5 hours skills training group

per week) for individuals who experience significant emotion dysregulation but who are not engaging in self-harm or suicidal behaviours.

DBT is a team treatment and active participation in a weekly team consultation meeting constitutes a core element of DBT. Consequently, it cannot be provided by a sole clinician. However, the majority of clinicians working on the DBT team in North Lee are psychologists.

I trust this clarifies the query raised.

Kind regards,



Ms. Sinéad Glennon
Head of Mental Health Services
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare