



28th November 2019

Ms Niamh Smyth T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ ref 48807/19 - Assistant Psychology Scheme - Cavan Monaghan To ask the Minister for Health the status of the future of the HSE assistant psychologist scheme aimed at children and adolescents in primary care psychology; his plans to further extend the scheme past March 2020; his views on the success of the scheme in counties Cavan and Monaghan.

Dear Deputy Smyth,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Representation, which you submitted to the Chief Officer, CHO 1 for response.

The success of the scheme in counties Cavan and Monaghan are in line with the national findings as described below;

Interim Evaluation

To assess the viability of the Assistant Psychology Grade, the HSE commissioned the University of Limerick to carry out a rolling evaluation, with quarterly updates to monitor the effectiveness of initiative. The evaluation report focused on the evidence of quality and effectiveness:

1. Core outcomes/clinical effectiveness of the service initiative
2. Equity of access and equity of service utilisation
3. Experience of parents/carers and others with service involvement
4. Prevent approaches

1. Core outcomes/clinical effectiveness of the service initiative

Primary Care Psychology Services are experiencing a growth in referrals. This growth is offset by an increase in the number of clients receiving treatment, leading to a modest rise in waiting lists. New initiatives developed within the Asst. Psychologist role are allowing more clients to receive treatment and are supporting the Asst. Psychologist role to have an increasing effect on the treatment lists. Based on the data provided by each Community Health Organisation (CHO) the introduction of Asst. Psychologists has freed up clinical time to the equivalent of 12 Psychologists. This means that more complex cases can be seen in a timely manner.

Analysis of the clinical measures demonstrates that the interventions conducted by Asst. Psychologists are clinically effective. However, additional data is required in order to identify the appropriate number of sessions per condition and treatment options.

2. Equity of access and equity of service utilisation

The data suggests that services are offered in areas that allow access to all socio-economic groups. It is too early to determine what factors influence the length of time a person spends on the waiting list: further analysis taking account of local management practices needs to be considered. It does appear that the Asst. Psychologists allows people an alternative quick access to treatment through workshops, and group sessions for severe psychological difficulties that avoid the traditional route of GPs and Allied Health Professionals

3. Experience of parents/carers and others with service involvement

The data suggest that clients are generally satisfied with the service they receive. Clients found treatments offered helpful and that the service supplied useful information and in an appropriate environment.

4. Prevention approaches

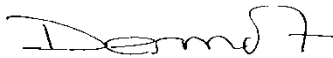
The prevention strategies have been highlighted by qualified psychologists and managers as a successful use of the new Asst. Psychologist role. Prevention approaches allow the introduction of new initiatives that can be developed to meet local need. The type of services offered by the enhanced primary care psychology service (incorporating the role of Asst. Psychologist) affords equality of access to clients in a cost-effective manner.

Next Steps

The initial indication emerging from the introduction of Asst. Psychologist within Primary Care Psychology Service is positive. In this context, the initiative will be extended to end of July 2021.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Dermot Monaghan,
Ceannasaí Seirbhíse, Seirbhísí Cúram Príomhúil
An Cabhán, Muineachán, Sligeach, Liatroim & Dún na nGall

Head of Service, Primary Care
Cavan, Monaghan, Sligo, Leitrim & Donegal.