



21st December 2020

Deputy John Lahart
Dáil Eireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ 42300/20

“To ask the Minister for Health the action being taken to address long waiting times for psychology appointments in primary care in south-western areas of Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter.” John Lahart - TD

Dear Deputy Lahart,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in regard to your parliamentary question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

It is acknowledged that waiting times for Psychology Services in Dublin South West are indeed lengthy. A number of factors have contributed to this, not least the pause on non-essential services at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although no staff from the Psychology Service were redeployed to Covid functions, the service has seen a large growth in demand, and waiting times have increased accordingly.

The HSE is in the process of recruiting a full time Psychologist to a vacant post in the West Tallaght area, which will have a substantial impact on waiting times. Meanwhile the following initiatives have been undertaken to address the issue:

- Throughout 2020 all parents/guardians of children on the waiting list and on the active caseload have been provided with psycho-educational materials to support their children in the context of the psychological impact of Covid 19, and parents were invited to contact the service for a phone consultation with a psychologist if required.
- The Psychology Service plans to provide psycho-educational materials and webinars on the HSE website, which will be available in early 2021.
- Face to face parenting intervention groups have been adapted for online use. It is planned that two parenting programmes will occur in January 2021 via telehealth (each group with one Psychologist and one Assistant Psychologist co-facilitating).
- Similarly anxiety group materials have been adapted to be provided individually to parents/guardians and their child via telehealth.

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

Yours sincerely,

Mary O'Kelly Head of Service.

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