



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
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**2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020,**  
**Deputy Duncan Smith,**  
**Dail Eireann**  
**Dublin 2.**

**PQ 10842/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health if his Department or the HSE has put in place support services or access to counselling for those bereaved by Covid-19; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Smith,

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.

In response to Covid 19 the HSE has put in place a National Psychosocial Response steering group who are leading on the HSE's psychosocial response to Covid 19. This group are currently devising a framework document that will guide all psychosocial responses to Covid in the coming months to ensure adherence to best practice and that maximum efficiencies are delivered with efforts made to reduce duplication and ensure all essential elements of service are in place. This work is being completed in consultation with HSE services and our partner agencies who are actively involved in the delivery of psychosocial responses. The framework document will be published at the end of July/ early August.

As part of this work the National Psychosocial Response steering group developed a guidance document: Guidance for Acute Crisis Management Teams: Bereavement Response for Residential and Acute Settings, Impacted by High Mortality Rates due to Covid-19. This document supports the rollout of local bereavement and psychosocial supports for both patients, their families and the healthcare workers especially in settings where there have been high mortality rates.

For more on the HSE National Psychosocial Response, read [here](#)

In addition Acute Hospitals have offered psychosocial and bereavement supports to patients, families and impacted staff.

The Irish Hospice Foundation Bereavement Support Line, in partnership with the HSE, was launched in June 2020. This new free phone telephone line (1800807077) has been set up to support those who have been affected by bereavement during the COVID-19 pandemic. The phone line provides connection and comfort and it can provide information on other services.

For more on this new service, read [here](#)

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In addition, the following supports were already in place and continue to be provided:

The HSE National Counselling service (NCS) is a counselling and psychotherapy service available free of charge in all regions of the country. The HSE Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) is a service for medical card holders- it is a short-term counselling service that provides sessions with a professionally qualified and accredited Counsellor/Therapist. A HSE Bereavement Counselling Service for Traumatic Deaths is also available in some regions.

Counselling is also provided by many HSE funded NGOs, especially those who have adapted to provide more online, telephone and text support during the pandemic. You can find some of these organisations listed [here](#).

Text 50808 is a new 24/7 confidential messaging service staffed by trained volunteers with clinical oversight. Read more [here](#).

MyMind – with the support of HSE and Sláintecare, MyMind is now providing free online counselling nationwide. This is specifically for individuals who have been adversely impacted by Covid-19, including those bereaved. Read more [here](#).

**The following is available to HSE staff:**

HSE Phone line for healthcare workers - a dedicated phone line for all healthcare workers, to give HCWs & managers information & advice during the Covid-19 outbreak and signpost them to bereavement supports for themselves and patients.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and StaffCare Careline counselling, connecting staff with counsellors for 1:1 telephone, video or online counselling.

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

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sinead Reynolds  
General Manager Mental Health Services