



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
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**23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020,**  
**Deputy David Cullinane,**  
**Dail Eireann,**  
**Dublin 2.**

**PQ 21406/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing universal access to counselling without charge on a general practitioner referral basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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.

Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) currently receives close to an average of 20,000 referrals per year. These referrals are from GP card holders only, of which there were 1,578,015 at the end of 2018 (Health in Ireland Key Trends: Government of Ireland 2018). If universal access to free counselling for the whole population were introduced it is estimated that this would lead to a threefold increase in referrals (This is estimated on the basis of current referral rate to CIPC and the current population of Ireland (4.78 million) : for every 79 GMS card holders there is one referral to CIPC. Extrapolating from this it is possible to project an estimated referral rate of 60,506 per year approximately three times the current rate of referral to CIPC).

Expansion of the CIPC service to provide for universal access to free counselling services on a GP referral basis needs to consider both direct and indirect costs associated with increased service provision. See table below for direct and indirect costs of such an expansion of the CIPC service.

<b>Provision of Universal Access to Free Counselling</b>	<b>€</b>
Cost per counselling session	78.15
Cost per completed course of counselling (average 6 sessions for an additional 40,000 referrals per year)	18,756,000
30 Senior Counsellor/Therapists @ 88,000	2,640,000
Accommodation [average cost of renting ten additional premises per CIPC service]	3,000,000
Trainee scheme	1,000,000
<b>Total Estimated Cost</b>	<b>25,396,000</b>



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These costings are an estimate of the minimum cost to roll out the service on a universal basis. More detailed population and needs analysis is required to calculate accurate costs.

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'.

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Dr Sinead Reynolds  
General Manager Mental Health Services