



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
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**29th September 2020,
Deputy Sorca Clarke,
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.**

PQ 23749/20

To ask the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to deal with the mental health crisis which has worsened since the onset of Covid-19 and the cancellation of services.

Dear Deputy Clarke,

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 April 2020, the HSE commissioned a National Psychosocial Response team to determine how best to address the psychological, social and wellbeing impacts of Covid-19, for the immediate, medium and long term, specifically focusing on the impacts on both the general public and Health Care Workers (HCWs) across the Health Sector. The "National Psychosocial Response to Covid-19 Framework" has been completed and work is ongoing on the operationalization of the recommendations in this framework.

The impact of emergencies such as Covid-19 can be felt, to varying degrees, across all population groups, the framework sets out 6 levels of psychosocial response, from level 1 which addresses Societal Wellbeing to level 5 and 6 which address specialist Mental Health Supports and needs.

It is Mental Health services at levels 5 & 6, that will provide appropriate support to people with significant mental health problems that may be associated with longer lasting distress due to Covid-19. However the focus of the framework is to provide tailored psychological supports at the earlier levels, with the focus on preventing psychological impacts from developing into significant mental health problems.

Levels 1 to 4 of the framework are aimed at planning and delivering services appropriate for each of the different levels of population need. Levels 3, "People to People Support" and level 4, "Primary Care and Voluntary Support," are specifically focused on providing immediate, practical, and accessible psychological support e.g. Psychological First Aid (PFA) for both the public and HCWs in high morality settings such as Nursing Homes and Acute Hospitals, on-line counselling supports, Psychological First Aid training for volunteers/managers to cascade supports to wider groups etc.

Based on the Framework and its associated recommendations, the HSE Acute and Community divisions, will be aligning integrated care, re-structuring, funding and planning for, tailored and sustainable service delivery, to address the mental health impacts of Covid at all levels of need, with a strong focus on prevention.



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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'.

Dr Sinead Reynolds
General Manager Mental Health Services