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21st October 2020

Deputy Marian Harkin,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 25214/20 - To ask the Minister for Health the resources planned as part of the Living with Covid Plan and in the context of Budget 2021 to ensure increases in staffing in mental health services, the development of out of hours crisis services and investment in primary care mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

-Marian Harkin

Dear Deputy Harkin,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

With reference to Budget 2021, an overall Mental Health Estimates Submission of €36.9m for new developments under Budget 2021 has been put forward. The Estimates submission makes provision for the ongoing development of CAMHS and adult services, mental health clinical care programmes, mental health engagement and recovery initiatives, the implementation of Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone (including the development of out of hours crisis supports) and the ongoing implementation of Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy for a Reduction in Suicide and Self-Harm.

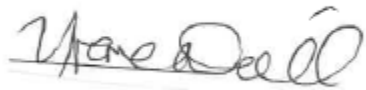
Particular initiatives are included pertaining to the enhancement of community mental health teams and the provision of step down mental health beds. Funding is being sought under Budget 2021 for the provision of additional WTEs for adult community mental health teams to allow them to support service users with higher acuity in a more intensive way in order to avoid inpatient admission. Increased WTEs will support service users who leave inpatient setting so that they can maintain their progress in the community and avoid readmission. Development of 3 CAMHS Mental Health Hubs incorporating provision of tele-psychiatry facility across 3 areas and increase CAMHS Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT) by 10% nationally on 2020 levels in order to increase capacity for both assessment and treatment is also included.

Increase the quantum of step down beds (35 additional) available in the community due to the reduction in capacity as a result of COVID-19. Additional service provision will assist in addressing challenges that may arise as a result of COVID-19 e.g. increased demand for services and / or potential for acute units to be closed due to COVID-19; reduce the length of time a patient / service user waits to be discharged from an approved centre; and improved patient / service user experience.

Health Sector Psycho-Social Plan in response to Covid-19: The HSE is coordinating a comprehensive psychosocial response to address the overall emergency and its impact into the future. Building on current psychosocial provision a formal work stream under HSE’s Covid-19 “Integrated National Operations Hub.” has been established and tasked with the development of the “Health Sector Psycho-Social Plan in response to Covid-19.” The project is overseen by a multi-disciplinary National Steering Group, reporting into the HSE’s Covid-19’s Integrated National Operations Hub. The aim of the response is to bring together the different strands of existing services, to ensure that there is a fully integrated strategic plan in place, to develop a health sector psychosocial response to Covid-19 for both the immediate and long term.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne O'Neill', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Yvonne O’Neill,
Interim National Director,
Community Operations