



Deputy O'Brien

Dail Eireann,

Kildare St.,

Dublin 2.

19th October 2020

Dear Deputy,

I refer to your recent parliamentary question which was passed to the HSE for response. I refer to PQ 26040/20 and advise that the same response applies.

PQ Number: 26041/20: *To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the inequalities that exist between professional psychology doctoral training courses regarding mental health and older persons; and if there are plans to address this by funding both the educational and counselling psychology doctoral courses in line with clinical psychology doctorates- Joe O'Brien.*

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Employment of psychologists in the Irish Health Services began in the mid-sixties. Mirroring developments in the United Kingdom, the initial cohort of psychologists recruited were all employed as clinical psychologists mainly within mental health services. In the early 1970s, in order to address the growing need for clinical psychologists and in the absence of formal training programmes, a clinical psychology in-service model was established within the Health Boards. This practice was formally recognised with the introduction of the Department of Health (DoH) regulations in 1979 governing the recruitment of psychologists which related specifically to clinical psychology. The HSE specific clinical psychology programmes, now at doctrinal level, continue to be developed and operated in partnership with higher educational institutes.

These clinical psychology training programmes have as their aim, as required by section 1.1 of the Psychological Society of Ireland's *Accreditation Guidelines for the Assessment of Postgraduate Professional Programmes in Clinical Psychology*;

The primary aim of each course should be to provide postgraduate training which will ensure that the Clinical Psychologist can provide psychology services in a competent and professional manner to those seeking them and enable the Clinical psychologist to become professionally qualified to work in the Irish Health Service and related services, see link below.

Clinical psychology is therefore, as specified by the Psychological Society of Ireland, the only branch of psychology whose central purpose is to work in the health sector.

Traditionally Educational psychologists secured employment in the educational sector, e.g. NEPS. Counselling psychology programmes emerged at master's level in 1991 and moved to doctrinal level in 2009. The employment of educational and counselling psychologists in the health service was governed by the 1985 DoH regulation limiting their employment as Community Psychologists, which excluded employment in all areas deemed appropriate to Clinical Psychologists based on their training and qualifications. Professionally qualified Counselling psychologists emerged post 2009 and when their education moved to doctrinal level. The qualification for professionally qualified educational psychologists move to doctrinal level in 2015. While these advances in education brought additional employment opportunities for these branches of psychology in the HSE their



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training did not facilitate their employment in all care settings as was the case for clinical psychologists whose training was specifically designed for health sector employment.

More recent development of programme content in both Counselling and Educational doctrinal programmes and placement experience, on foot of the 2016 *Report of the Review Group – Eligibility Criteria for Recruitment of Psychologists to the Health Service Executive*, and the recommendation to create of a National Psychology Placement Office lead to the establishment of a Project Team to implement this recommendation. The Project Team was tasked with, inter alia, to consider the preparation of a workforce plan for psychological services in the HSE, including an examination of the current framework for training psychologists for the health service and the type and skill-mix required for the future.

In February 2019, HSE Community Operations convened the Project Team, chaired by Dr Cathal Morgan, comprised of representatives from Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology; Social Care, Disability, and Mental Health services; Community and Acute services; Operational and National HR; and the Health and Social Care Professions office. The work of the Project Team has been informed by a thorough stakeholder consultation process. Due to the recent public health emergency the work of the Project Team was paused in March 2020 and reconvened in early August 2020.

It is anticipated that the Report of the Project Team will be finalised in the coming weeks.

Link

Psychological Society of Ireland's Accreditation Guidelines for the Assessment of Postgraduate Professional Programmes in Clinical Psychology;

[file:///C:/Users/dugganp/Downloads/Accreditation%20Guidelines%20for%20Postgraduate%20Courses%20in%20Clinical%20Psychology_file_190%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/dugganp/Downloads/Accreditation%20Guidelines%20for%20Postgraduate%20Courses%20in%20Clinical%20Psychology_file_190%20(2).pdf)

Yours sincerely.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul O'Sullivan'.

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