



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
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June 28th 2021,
Deputy Cian O'Callaghan
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ Number: 20114/21

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he will undertake an urgent review of the allocation of mental health services to young persons; the areas in which gaps in provision of services exist by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

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 relation to Mental Health services for young persons, the Mental Health Division published Operational Guidelines in 2015, which were reviewed and updated in 2019. These set out the guidelines that each CAMHS service shall adhere to.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/camhs/operational-guideline/>

The HSE complete this review through a number of means, many are outlined below.

Waiting times

Waiting times for young people to be seen by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services continue to be an issue in a number of CHO's. A renewed focus on improving capacity and throughput is in place in this area and some improvement is being shown.

Waiting lists vary according to Community Healthcare Organisation where although some areas have relatively short waiting lists regrettably waiting times are longer in other counties.

Factors such as availability of specialist CAMHS clinicians, current vacancies and difficulties in recruiting in an international context can impact on waiting times in various areas.

Referrals

There are two types of referral; an urgent referral and a routine referral.

Every effort is made to prioritise urgent referrals so that young people with high risk presentations are seen as soon as possible and this is often within 24 to 48 hours. Severity of presenting symptoms affects waiting times - where waiting times for those with high risk presentations are shorter. This may impact on wait times for cases



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that are considered, by a clinician, to be less severe. CAMHS referral teams meet weekly to review all referrals and to assess the risk to the young person. CAMHS wait lists are also impacted by capacities in other parts of the system including primary care psychology and disability services where young people may not receive early intervention and thus their needs escalate necessitating referrals to CAMHS.

There are initiatives underway to increase capacity in primary care psychology services across the HSE.

In order to address gaps in the provision of services, there are a number of service initiatives underway, including the establishment of the CAMHS Eating Disorder Teams in the Community, which has led to a reduction in the numbers of young people being sent abroad for specialist Eating Disorder Treatment.

The HSE also provides funding to the NGO sector with whom the HSE has significant SLAs in place to provide services on its behalf to young people, these include (Jigsaw, Bodywhys, Foroige etc).

An annual review of these SLAs has just been completed. We are currently looking at synergies between different NGOs to ensure they operate at optimal effectiveness with reference to capacity and demand in each NGO. It is hoped that this initiative will reduce access waiting times if these exist in a particular NGO service provider, and will enable CAMHS teams focus on those presenting with moderate to severe conditions.

Community CAMHS staffing:

In Ireland, 25% of the population is under 18 years of age and in December 2020 there was a total of 759 staff in the Child and Adolescent Community Mental Health Teams nationally (661 Clinical).

CAMHS Inpatient Services

There are currently 72 Inpatient CAMHS beds available in four units, for use by all CHO's –

Merlin Park, Galway – 20

Eist Linn, Cork – 16

Linn Dara, Dublin 24

St Vincents, Fairview 12.

A further 20 beds will be provided at the new Children's Hospital, which will include 8 Specialist Eating Disorder Beds.

10 additional Forensic CAMHS beds will be provided in the new National Forensic Facility currently under construction in Portrane, which will bring the total number of beds to 102, in line with Vision for Change recommendations.

There were 322 children admitted to CAMHS in-patient units during 2020.



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Continual weekly monitoring of the activity and wait list for in-patient services takes place, with on-going engagement with the in-patient units and CHO areas as appropriate.

HSE Mental Health has commenced an examination of CAMHS in-patients services to look at the structures and activity levels of the four units in terms of governance, bed capacity and usage, admissions and discharges and responsiveness to demand/referrals. This work is in its early stages. Although the governance of CAMHS is the responsibility of each CHO Management Team, the national MH office provides oversight and direction on how CAMHS should function and perform (as outlined in the Guidance document). It is for each Head of Service to ensure services are being delivered which address local service need and where this is not being done, to identify the unmet need and develop a business case/management plan to address such need deficit. Additional resources/services can then be considered as part of the annual service planning process.

In addition, there is a continuous review process in place on a monthly basis between CHO s and the Mental Health National Office, which reviews CAMHS activity and performance and where necessary, required corrective actions are agreed

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

Yours sincerely,

Jim Ryan
Assistant National Director
Head of Operations