

20th July 2021,
Deputy Mark Ward,
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ 21409/21

To ask the Minister for Health his plans to provide a multi-agency mental health crisis de-escalation team; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Mark Ward

Dear Deputy Ward,

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.

The new mental health policy Sharing the Vision (2020) recognises the need for a whole-of population, whole-of-government approach to the delivery of mental health services. In adopting this approach, the policy is underpinned by an ecological model which uses a stepped care approach that ensures that the values from Sharing the Vision are preserved throughout. A 'stepped care' approach seeks to ensure that each person can access a range of options of varying intensity to match their needs. In other words, there can be a 'stepping up' or a 'stepping down' in accordance with the stage of recovery. A stepped approach to care should also help to increase efficiency by 'shifting' constituencies of need towards more of the 'upstream' services, that is, promotion, prevention, early intervention, recovery and participation. Over time, this should reduce the need for more expensive 'downstream' acute and crisis response services. In this context, strategic investment in 'upstream' services should be viewed as an investment rather than a cost.

The HSE is considering a number of different options in delivering de-escalation Services depending on the local need and resources available in the Community. Out-of-hours crisis cafés are proposed as a new referral option, to support individuals to deal with an immediate crisis and to plan safely, drawing on their strengths, resilience and coping mechanisms to manage their mental health and wellbeing. Attendees would be able to access talk therapies, coping strategies and one-to-one peer support, provided by paid core staff assisted by a team of appropriately trained volunteers, working on a rota basis. The cafés may reduce demands on EDs by providing an environment more suited to the needs of some individuals who present. Moreover, appropriately and safely staffed crisis cafés can also be an alternative access point for children and adolescents

Other areas are working collaboratively with Garda and other Statutory Services e.g. Local Authorities to develop Initiatives for Service users. In addition, tele-psychiatry models could be a way to provide 24-hour psychiatry consultations to service users of all ages, who can access supports from a variety of locations such as primary care centres, GP practices and VCS services. In proposing the continuum of services set out as the vision for a modern recovery oriented mental health system, it is recognised that the balance of emphasis across each



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service element may vary in HSE areas across the country, in line with prevailing needs and geographies. Every service element must be present in each Regional Integrated Care Organisation (RICO) area but each area would need to consider the best balance and models of delivery and service elements to meet their area needs, taking into account their staffing levels. These proposals include the proviso that all service elements should include access to talk therapies as a first-line treatment option for most people who experience mental health difficulties.

In April 2021, the HSE launched the Model of Care for Adult Accessing Talk Therapies while Attending Specialist Mental Health Services.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/talking-therapies-moc.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

Jim Ryan
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Head of Operations