



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.
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22nd February 2021
Deputy Thomas Gould,
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ Ref 6079/21

To ask the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to commissioning a trauma awareness video for the HSE similar to that commissioned and made publicly available for child protection and suicide awareness; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

By videos I meant e-training similar to that offered for Children First and the ETalkSuicide and Living Works Starts. Trauma awareness is, I have been advised, considered the first step towards trauma informed care which is well defined here: <https://traumainformedoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/What-is-Trauma-Informed-Care.pdf>

Dear Deputy Gould,

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.

There are no immediate plans in HSE Mental Health to commission a public video on trauma awareness, in the context of trauma-informed care. Nevertheless, future campaigns in this area could include such items and are not ruled out.

To give you wider context, note that the new national mental health policy – [Sharing the Vision, a Mental Health Policy for Everyone](#) (2020) – will now significantly inform the direction of development of trauma informed care and approaches across our Mental Health services. Sharing the Vision is Ireland's ambitious, multifaceted national mental health policy to enhance the provision of mental health services and supports across a broad continuum from mental health promotion to specialist mental delivery during the period 2020-2030.

In January 2021, the [National Implementation and Monitoring Committee](#) (NIMC) was established for Sharing the Vision, and is collectively responsible for driving and overseeing the long-term implementation of the national mental health policy.

The HSE is working to set up a specific HSE Implementation Group (HIG) to implement the recommendations of the policy, that fall under the Executive's remit.



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Trauma-informed care and Sharing the Vision

Sharing the Vision describes trauma-informed care as *“an approach which acknowledges that many people who experience mental health difficulties have experienced some form of trauma in their life, although this is not the case for everyone. A trauma-informed approach seeks to resist traumatising or re-traumatising service users and staff. Trauma-informed service delivery means that everyone at all levels of the mental health services and wider mental health provision has a basic understanding of trauma and how it can affect families, groups, organisations and communities as well as individuals.”*

The policy highlights trauma-informed mental health service delivery as one of the four key service delivery principles underpinning the overall strategy. The emerging evidence that trauma-informed systems can result in better outcomes for people affected by trauma is strongly acknowledged. A trauma-informed approach highlights how everyone can have a positive role in preventing mental health difficulties from arising by intervening early to limit further escalation of distress.

Sharing the Vision has a stated outcome that all mental health service users (and their families, carers and supporters) will have access to timely, evidence informed interventions as a result of an outcomes-based focus that puts people before processes. In line with the core values and principles of this policy, mental health services will be evidence-informed and recovery-oriented and will adopt trauma-informed approaches to care, based on lived experience and individual need. Mental health services will be clinically effective, delivered in adherence to statutory requirements and based on an integrated multi-disciplinary approach.

These inherent commitments to embedding trauma-informed approaches across our mental health services will ensure considerable advancements in this area, in line with the implementation of Sharing the Vision to 2030.

HSE Psychosocial Response to Covid-19

Specifically in relation to the development of trauma informed care within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the HSE recognises the significant psychological, emotional and social impacts the pandemic is having on healthcare workers across all sectors and many individuals, families and communities across the country.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, both the HSE and our NGO partners have been working hard to provide mental and social wellbeing supports and services to our staff and to the many different communities in our society. In January 2021, the HSE published the "[HSE Psychosocial Response to Covid-19](#)," a next stage planning document on how to mitigate against the longer term implications and sustainably support the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of the public and healthcare workers.

The psychological and mental health impact of emergencies such as Covid-19 can be felt, to varying degrees, across all population groups, the framework which is closely aligned to *Sharing the Vision*, sets out a layered care approach of 6 levels of psychosocial response, from level 1 which addresses Societal Wellbeing to level 5 and 6 which addresses specialist Mental Health Supports and needs.



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In terms of trauma informed care, the focus of the framework is to provide tailored psychological supports at earlier levels i.e. 1-4, where the aim of services is on preventing psychological impacts from Covid-19, developing into significant mental health problems. Our psychosocial response teams both in the community and acute hospitals, have developed information literature, self help material, training videos e.g. on Psychological First Aid and direct person supports, which are aimed at addressing psychosocial distress before it develops further. The development a specific trauma awareness video would be very beneficial at this level of response moving forward.

The framework also focuses on Mental Health services at levels 5 & 6, that will provide appropriate support to people with significant psychological and social problems that may arise from longer lasting distress due to Covid-19, which in turn can lead to mental health problems such as post traumatic stress disorder.

The report outlines the need to further build on this framework and enable greater alignment between the HSE's Acute and Community psychosocial and mental health supports. Further funding has been secured and currently the structures are being finalised which will be required to deliver a sustainable response for the duration of Covid and the post emergency term.

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

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sinead Reynolds
General Manager Mental Health Services