



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.

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2nd March 2021

**Deputy Sean Sherlock
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.**

PQ 8175/21

To ask the Minister for Health the way in which his Department plans to address the emergence of new mental health difficulties among the population in view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic

Dear Deputy Sherlock

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 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. It provides a layered care approach to addressing the psychosocial consequences of Covid-19, from a societal level and through the levels of need of the population across the life span.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/psychosocial-response-group/>

The report's framework, sets out 6 levels of structured psychosocial response, which will enable the HSE to effectively integrate the wide range of wellbeing and mental health supports available across the health sector and those that could be offered.

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.

Mental Health services at levels 5 & 6, are targeted at providing appropriate support to people who do develop significant psychological and social problems arising from longer lasting distress due to Covid-19.

Work on levels 1 to 4, is aimed at planning, funding and delivering services appropriate for different levels of population need, but with the same preventative aim. It is in these areas that the HSE staff have been working hard to augment existing services and introduce new supports, which are take into account the health restrictions of Covid-19.

Levels 3, " People to People Support" and level 4, "Primary Care and Voluntary Support," have been specifically focused on, as they provide immediate, practical, and accessible psychological support e.g. Psychological First



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Aid (PFA) for both the public and HCWs, free on-line counselling supports, local call back services, crisis text lines, self help supports, PFA training for volunteers/managers to cascade supports to wider groups etc.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. O'Brien'.

Thomas O'Brien
General Manager Mental Health Services