



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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

T 01 6207304 R: jim.ryan1@hse.ie

Head of Operations, Mental Health Service
St Loman's Hospital, Palmerstown Dublin 20
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2nd March 2021

**Deputy Neale Richmond
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.**

PQ 8252/21

To ask the Minister for Health when in-person counselling services will be permitted to resume; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Neale Richmond

Dear Deputy Richmond,

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 HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) has implemented a range of Tele-health counselling options for clients including Structured Telephone Counselling (STC) and Online Video Counselling (OVC) using the HSE approved platform *Attend Anywhere*. The NCS is following public health guidance to reduce footfall and face to face encounters where possible and to support remote working where feasible. Decisions on the medium of counselling offered are made in collaboration with clients attending the NCS.

The majority of counselling appointments currently provided are through Tele-health however the NCS continues to offer face to face appointments on a limited basis where Tele-health options are not appropriate. This may occur for example if a client has no internet access or is unable to secure a confidential space for phone/online counselling and a face to face appointment is deemed clinically necessary. Such situations include concern about risk to a client such as suicide or self-harm, domestic violence etc. Decisions in relation to provision of face to face appointments are made locally on a case by case basis. The number of face to face appointments provided has continued to increase as the level of community transmission of COVID-19 reduces. Face to face appointments are provided from locations which are fully compliant with all HSE COVID-19 infection prevention and control measures.

The full re-instatement of face to face counselling on an ongoing basis as part of the NCS blended model of service delivery offering both telehealth and face to face appointments, is dependent on public health guidance and local variables.

Decisions regarding provision of face to face appointments are reviewed on an ongoing basis in accordance with updated public health guidance and local service requirements.

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

Yours sincerely,



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Yours sincerely,

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

Thomas O'Brien
General Manager Mental Health Services