



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
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**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021**  
**Deputy Thomas Pringle**  
**Dail Eireann,**  
**Dublin 2.**

**PQ 1224/21**

**To ask the Minister for Health the additional mental health supports being made available during Covid-19 restrictions; the way in which communities are being reached if they do not have access to a mobile phone or internet for online counselling sessions; if there are measures for emergency in-person mental health support; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Pringle,

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 Psychosocial Response to Covid-19" governance group has written a report, which you can access via this link, <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/psychosocial-response-group/>. This report provides a detailed overview of the effects of the pandemic on society. This work was based on consultation with mental health specialists, Tusla staff and other relevant stakeholders. As part of this work a national and community mapping exercise was conducted on all psychosocial activities taking place both within the HSE and across partner organisations, to identify areas for further improvement for the general population, across each life span. There are plans to appoint a HSE psychosocial response board which will develop specific implementation plans to build on existing activities and services to support, introduce, expand, and partner where needed.

**Signposting to services;** the YourMentalHealth Information Line (1800 111 888) operates on a 24/7 basis. It provides information to the public about mental health supports and services that are provided by the HSE and funded partners nationally, locally, online and by phone/text. The team can advise how and when these services can be accessed. In addition, the HSElive team can signpost individuals to locally based psychological first aid call back services, if it is suitable for their needs. The HSE also provides validated mental health education and information on supports and services via [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie). For those who may need immediate support, HSE Mental Health in collaboration with partners SpunOut.ie and launched the 24/7 text-based active listening service Text 50808. This is a free service which provides immediate support for people going through a mental health or emotional crisis.



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### **Primary care supports:**

During the COVID-19 pandemic the HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) responded by implementing Tele-health 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 support remote working where feasible. Decisions to pause face to face counselling are made in collaboration with clients attending the NCS.

Face to face appointments are currently being offered on a limited basis where Tele-health options are not appropriate (e.g. 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.

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, will depend on public health guidance and local variables.

These decisions are reviewed on an ongoing basis in accordance with updated public health guidance.

### **Young people**

The HSE funds Jigsaw to provide youth mental health services for those with mild to moderate mental health difficulties. Jigsaw provide face-to-face, online and phone based services to young people aged between 12 to 25 years old while working with communities to resource and support parents and other adults who work with young people. Face-to-face services are delivered from 12 nationwide locations in the form of brief intervention sessions with healthcare professionals, usually taking place across 6 to 8 appointments. Other services include live 1 to 1 online chat, phone based support provided by a counsellor and text support. All Jigsaw services are highlighted on [www.jigsaw.ie](http://www.jigsaw.ie)

In addition, the HSE also partners with MyMind <https://mymind.org> and Turn2Me <https://turn2me.ie/> who provide individual and group support.

### **Specialist Mental Health Services**

Specialists Mental Health Services can be accessed via Primary Care/a person's own G.P. Services are available face to face, by telephone or online through secure video. Specialist General Adult Mental Health Services provide multidisciplinary interventions for those presenting with moderate to severe mental health difficulties. These consultant led teams operate in the community where they receive referrals from primary care services. In terms of urgent referrals these teams have the ability to respond to urgent referrals with most teams having slots for urgent cases to be seen that day or the next working day. Outside normal working hours mental health services also have an urgent response capability provided through the on-call medical system which operates in all acute hospitals with a 24 hour ED. This on-call system consists of a consultant psychiatrist together with an NCHD. The consultants and NCHDs work within the Community Mental Health Teams or in the Hospital Liaison



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Services and provide the on-call service in addition to their day time commitment with Community Mental Health Teams.

Finally, our hospital emergency departments and our inpatient units offer 24/7 services.

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 'Sinead Reynolds'.

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Dr Sinead Reynolds  
General Manager Mental Health Services