



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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

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28th January 2021
Deputy Mark Ward,
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ Number: 45119/20

To ask the Minister for Health the services in place to allow persons to receive therapy and counselling on a face-to-face basis under the current restrictions.

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.

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.

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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