

9<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Deputy Holly Cairns,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 15911/21**

**“To ask the Minister for Health the details of HSE psychologist posts since January 2014 in CHO4 that were competed for via local interview as opposed to the relevant national recruitment panel; the dates the posts were advertised; the exact locations of the services; the rationale in each instance for a local interview being used over the national recruitment panel process; the related recruitment rules on this process; the number of such competitions that were sanctioned by local or national human resources; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”**

Dear Deputy Cairns,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Since 2014, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare have been proactively working to develop the psychology services across Cork Kerry in line with Vision for Change (2006) & Sharing the Vision (2020) recommendations. There is currently a national shortage of professionally trained psychologists and historically Cork Kerry Community Health Care area (CHO4) has found it difficult to fill vacant posts.

In terms of recruitment and retaining of staff, Mental Health Psychology management in consultation with the Head of Mental Health Service in the area continue to work on optimising and maximising the number of staff available to meet critical clinical need. All posts, whether new development posts or replacement posts (such as resignations and retirement) need approval by the Head of service and the Chief Officer in the CHO. Once approved, the psychology manager will review any requests for internal reassignment on a grade for grade basis prior to the post being expressed out to a national panel.

In order to retain staff in a difficult recruitment environment, each request for internal transfer is considered on its own merits and with due consideration to impact and disruption to existing service. Typically, staff have requested to change position to accommodate changes in personal circumstances and staff are advised that it may not always be possible to facilitate such requests given service need. Psychology management will also make requests of staff to move internally when it is necessary to meet critical clinical need or cover gaps in service.

In the case where an individual is moved internally, their substantive backfill will subsequently be offered out through the national panel system. There have been occasions where posts have been

unable to be filled via the national recruitment system. In such cases, staff grade psychologists in the locality will be given an opportunity to express interest in these higher grade appointments on an interim basis pending new senior panel formation. All higher duty appointments are with senior management approval. Again all such appointments will be made based on clinical need and following a local expression of interests with skills match selection process to ensure a candidate can fulfil the role on an interim basis.

The service adheres to all HR processes ie the Public Services Management (recruitment & Appointments) Act 2004. At all times Mental Health Services strives to ensure that the staff profile and skill mix appropriately meets the needs of all service users. I can confirm that there has been approval to cover reduction of hours (eg parental leave) which has resulted in capacity to create temporary posts which in turn maximises service provision. There have been numerous appointments in psychology in the mental health services since 2014 across all grades including the development of a new training programme in partnerships with UCC to increase the locally and national staff pool of professionally trained psychologists.

The service has a robust psychology governance structure in mental health services, with a strong focus on optimising service provision in line with Vision for Change (2006) and indeed its successor Sharing the Vision (2021).

I trust the above clarifies the queries raised.

Kind Regards,



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**Mr Kevin Morrison**  
**A/Head of Mental Health Services**  
**Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**