



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath20.

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June 30th 2021,
Deputy Mark Ward,
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ Number: 24048/21

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of the increased capacity required to clear current waiting list for mental health counselling at primary care for adult services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Mark Ward

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.

The Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) service was established by the HSE in July 2013 as a mental health initiative to provide counselling to adults experiencing mild to moderate psychological difficulties who present in the primary care setting. All adults in receipt of a medical card are currently eligible for the service. Access is by referral from the client's GP or a member of the Primary Care Team. All clients referred to CIPC are requested to opt into the service before they are allocated to a counsellor and an appointment is then offered when a counselling place is available.

CIPC is available in each community health area to GMS card holders and provides time-limited face-to-face counselling for adults experiencing common mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression. It offers a structured programme of up to eight counselling sessions with a professionally qualified counsellor/therapist. 10 posts were allocated to CIPC in 2013 to coordinate delivery of the service which is provided by employed counsellor/therapists and counsellors contracted through an agency. The CIPC model of service encompasses: provision in primary care settings; standardised referral and assessment; client opt-in; GP feedback; clinical outcome evaluation. CIPC counsellors utilise a range of counselling interventions depending on presenting issues and assessed needs.

The Sláintecare report (2017) and Sharing the Vision, A Mental Health Policy for Everyone (DOH 2020) both recommend access to counselling in primary care on a needs basis. The HSE NCS welcomes the further expansion of the CIPC service to all adults who experience mild-moderate psychological difficulties on referral from their GP or primary care practitioner.

Currently CIPC receives an average of 19,000 referrals per annum reaching approximately 28% of the Adult GMS population. The HSE CIPC service has expanded in response to specific needs that have arisen to date including



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provision of counselling to those affected by the Cervical Check Crisis and the RCOG review, those who require counselling as a result of the psychological impact of Sodium Valproate. More recently CIPC has expanded in response to needs arising in light of the COVID-19 pandemic with local service developments including provision of bereavement counselling, and counselling to those impacted directly as a result of COVID-19.

These developments have impacted on the resources of the CIPC service. Most recent available figures indicate that at the end of April there were 3,039 people on the waiting list for counselling with CIPC.

In order to offer counselling to all those on the waiting list additional significant investment in the CIPC service is required to enable it to respond to demand in a timely manner. This includes additional infrastructure, provision of additional counselling hours as well as additional clinical governance oversight to ensure a high standard of service delivery.

CIPC offers clients for whom the service is suitable an initial assessment and up to 8 counselling sessions. A full course of counselling is costed at €624 per client (€78.00 per counselling session). The cost for a complete course of counselling sessions for 3039 clients is €1,896,336.

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

Yours sincerely,

Jim Ryan
Assistant National Director
Head of Operations