



2nd December 2021

Deputy Louise O'Reilly,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 52457/21 - To ask the Minister for Health if additional funding will be directed toward expanding the HSE counselling in primary care and HSE primary care psychology services given the mental health impact of the pandemic as well as specialist secondary mental health services for those who need them; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Louise O'Reilly

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 52457/21) which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE has developed a comprehensive National Psychosocial Framework for responding to the psychological and mental health impact of COVID-19. This framework provides for a layered care approach to addressing the psychosocial consequences of Covid-19, from a societal level and then through the levels of need of the population across the life span. The framework's structure enables the health service to effectively integrate the wide range of wellbeing and mental health supports available so as to ensure supports are in place to meet the needs of the whole population, while also responding to the needs of those who have been impacted the most.

The HSE and many of its funded NGO partners have successfully fast-tracked new telehealth options. These include innovative online, text and phone therapeutic supports. All available supports and services can be found on yourMentalHealth.ie.

In addition to national initiatives, each local CHO area offers a number of key supports including a Psychological First Aid Call Back Service - for health care workers and targeted groups of the public, who may be feeling stressed or anxious about the impact of COVID-19. Details for how to access this support is available at: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/psychosocial-response-group/>

In addition, the HSE's National Counselling Service provides access to counselling in primary care through its CIPC service. This is a Mental Health service that provides time limited counselling of up to 8 sessions to adult GMS cardholders with mild to moderate psychological difficulties. CIPC operates from over 240 locations situated throughout Ireland.

CIPC contributes to the HSE's psychosocial response to the COVID-19 pandemic through its provision of psychological first aid, counselling for the psychological impact of COVID-19 and bereavement counselling.

Information about the HSE's National Counselling Services are available at:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/national-counselling-service/>

CIPC counselling is delivered by employed staff as well as counsellors who are contracted on an agency basis. Many private sector counsellors and psychotherapists are contracted to provide counselling as part of CIPC service provision across the country.

Finally, in consideration of the children and young people waiting over 12 months to access Primary Care psychology services, Primary Care Operations and the Department of Health has provided additional funding to year end to decrease the numbers of children and young people waiting over 12 months to access psychology services.

Since the commencement of these additional measures, significant progress has been made in the areas with an approximate reduction of 1,026 children or young people from the waiting lists to date.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Seán McArt

General Manager Primary Care
National Community Operations