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To ask the Minister for Health if he has plans either through additional funding or strategic planning to address mental health issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

The HSE has been requested to respond to your question above.

HSE Psychosocial Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

At the early stages of the pandemic in 2020, the HSE formed the Psychosocial Response Project Group to address the impact of the psychological and social effects of the coronavirus pandemic. This work was initiated by Anne O'Conner, the Chief Operations Officer as chair of the HSE's Integrated National Operations Hub (INOH), to address the need for a national health sector psychosocial plan and to support the overall wellbeing, resilience and mental health of our population.

The resulting framework focuses on the psychosocial impact of the public health emergency. A report was subsequently published entitled the [HSE Psychosocial Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic](#). It provides detailed guidance and direction for HSE leadership, staff and partners on implementing a psychosocial response, based on a layered care framework of support. The support outlined is accessible to everybody, including the general public, healthcare workers and other priority groups within the population, based on levels of need at any given time. This

framework ensures that the critical psychosocial part of Ireland's response is promoted, supported and embedded within all Covid-19 responses.

- Read more about the HSE Psychosocial Response to the pandemic, [here](#).

HSE funding to NGOs providing mental health and suicide prevention services

A considerable number of NGOs are already funded by the HSE to provide supports for the general population, mental health promotion, self-help and information services, encompassing societal wellbeing, resilience and safety. More formalised people-to-people services (for those with more mild to moderate difficulties) may also be delivered by HSE-funded agencies, and within GP and Primary Care services.

The following information is on national funding to NGOs from the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) and HSE Mental Health, and excludes others that may also receive funding at local level, from HSE Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) or from other sources (e.g., Healthy Ireland, the Sláintecare Integration Fund).

Presently the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) funds 20 national NGOs, all providing support at different levels or to specific, targeted groups. Funding is provided in alignment with goals, objectives and actions in [Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide](#). As we plan ahead to 2022 and beyond, funding will also be aligned to [Sharing the Vision – A Mental health Policy for Everyone](#).

- Aware
- BeLonG To Youth Services
- SpunOut.ie
- Dublin Simon Community
- First Fortnight Ltd
- GAA
- ISPCC/Childline
- LGBT Ireland
- Men's Health Forum Ireland
- MyMind
- National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF)

- Pieta House
- Samaritans
- Shine (SeeChange, Headline)
- Suicide or Survive (SOS)
- Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI)
- Turn2Me
- Union of Students in Ireland
- Exchange House
- National Family Resource Centres Mental Health Promotion Project.

HSE Mental Health also funds the following NGOs on a national basis;

- Foróige
- Grow Ireland
- ADHD Ireland
- Mental Health Ireland
- Mental Health Reform
- Jigsaw
- Text 50808
- BodyWhys
- St John Of God Hospital
- Bloomfield Hospital
- Highfield Hospital.

Since the onset of the pandemic in Ireland, the HSE has been proactive in considering both the financial and non-financial challenges of Section 39 agencies due to COVID-19. The process of negotiating SLAs for 2022 with each agency is presently underway, and involves careful consideration and analysis of needs, with particular emphasis on adapting services and responding to the challenges of the current pandemic.

It should be noted that in addition to pre-agreed funding, the HSE NOSP allocated additional once-off funding was allocated to specific projects in 2020. This was made possible through a once-off allocation (€590k) from the Department of Health to NOSP, with a particular emphasis on pandemic-specific response or adaptation projects. You can read more on funding made available through the NOSP, in our [Annual Report for 2020](#).

Other initiatives

The groundwork for the development of digital mental health supports and services in Ireland began a number of years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, during the pandemic the public began to access online mental health content, self-help, online and phone supports and online counselling in unprecedented numbers. The HSE successfully fast-tracked and continues to develop and invest in a range of low-intensity, highly scalable online mental health supports that are now in place. For example;

- Online self-help – such as ‘Silvercloud’, the free online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy service which is now available to receive referrals from Primary Care Psychology, the National Counselling Service, Jigsaw and GPs across Ireland, enabling people to start accessing support within 24 hours of referral. Additional accessible online self-help resources that have been introduced include the successful ‘Minding Your Wellbeing’ and ‘Stress Control’ programmes, both from HSE Health and Wellbeing.
- In response to the pandemic, the HSE now funds and supports the ongoing delivery of the Bereavement Support Line in partnership with the Irish Hospice Foundation.
- There has been significant investment in health services delivered using technology, including video consultation, for example video-enabled consultations that are facilitated by Attend Anywhere, Blue Eye and a range of open access platforms.
- Mental health information and signposting - particularly the provision and promotion of mental health content on www.yourmentalhealth.ie and the development of multi-lingual mental health information resources in partnership with Translate Ireland.

2022 Funding

The Estimates process for 2022 focuses on high-level priorities aligned to national strategy and policy, taking account of strategic priorities, operational requirements, and known demand and capacity issues. As we will be 'living with' COVID-19 for some time, service delivery and new developments are adapting to integrate responses to the pandemic into the 'business as usual' context. Further discussions and engagements are taking place to finalise and sign off on planned developments for 2022.

Yours sincerely,



Mr John Meehan

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