



3rd November 2021

Deputy Steven Matthews,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 50772/21 - To ask the Minister for Health his views on the adequacy of existing mental health supports for children in County Wicklow; the number of children under 18 years of age who are waiting three months or longer to see a psychologist following a referral from a general practitioner; the steps he is taking to reduce the wait times; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Steven Matthews

Dear Deputy Matthews,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 50772/21) which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Primary Care psychology has long established roles in caring for children with mild-to moderate mental health needs or signposting those who need specialist services. In line with the National Access Policy, it provides an increasing level of service to those with non-complex disabilities or as yet undiagnosed/unrecognised disabilities.

CAMHS provide specialist mental health service to those aged up to 18 years, who have reached the threshold for a diagnosis of moderate to severe mental health disorder that require the input of a multi-disciplinary mental health teams, such as moderate to severe anxiety disorders, moderate to severe depression, Bi Polar Affective disorder, Psychosis, moderate to severe eating disorders, self-harm that require the input of a multi-disciplinary mental health team.

County Wicklow crosses both CHO 6 and CHO 7 and there are 14 Community CAMHS teams across both areas. Opening times vary from service to service based on service user needs, however generally referrals are screened daily during working hours (Monday to Friday 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.) Outside of these hours, or in an emergency situation where no Community CAMHS Team is available, it is advised that the emergency services are contacted or that the child or adolescent is brought to the Emergency Department of the nearest hospital to access a mental health assessment. In many areas of the country a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist is on call 24 hours and can be contacted by the Accident and Emergency services if required.

There are currently 7,695 children and young people (under 18 years of age) who are waiting 3 months or longer to access primary care psychology services in Ireland. For information, the data provided does not contain a breakdown of the paths of referral onto the waiting lists.

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 850 children or young people from the waiting lists to date.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seán McArt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Seán McArt

General Manager Primary Care
National Community Operations