



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Office of the Head of Primary Care
South East Community Healthcare
HSE Offices, Lacken
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15th September 2021

Mr. Michael Lowry TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 42161/21

To ask the Minister for Health the number of psychologists currently working within HSE services in South County Tipperary; the efforts South Tipperary HSE services are making to find a qualified psychologist to cover upcoming maternity leave in the area; the HSE's position on the recruitment of psychologists to cover maternity leave; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Lowry,

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

I have examined the matter and the following response outlines the current position.

Primary Care Psychology Services has sought to adapt service delivery through the Covid-19 pandemic in the best way possible. Primary Care Services continue to advocate for additional psychology resources. However, with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, groups and workshops are no longer physically possible owing to the need for Infection Prevention and Control measures. In this regard, services have implemented telehealth platforms where appropriate and possible to support remote service delivery.

Currently there are 3 whole time equivalent (WTE) posts available in primary care psychology in South Tipperary. There are 3 WTE vacancies in South Tipperary which are being progressed as follows:

- 1 WTE psychologist (agency) is due to commence this month
- 1 WTE staff grade psychologist post (recently vacated) - which is being progressed for filling in line with HSE Recruitment policy
- Given challenges in recruitment to a staff grade psychology post from a national panel, this was subsequently converted to a 0.6 WTE Senior Psychology post. However filling was delayed pending the outcome of a national workplace relations process which has now concluded. A national senior recruitment campaign is due to be held in November 2021. The remaining funding from this WTE was used to fund play therapy sessions through external outsourcing.

Given the level of demand for psychology over the last number of years, psychology services have been able to deliver high level services through workshops and groups with the help of a national project allowing the recruitment of Assistant Psychologists. In addition, 2021, a submission for funding to implement a Psychology

Waiting List Initiative aimed at children and young people waiting over 52 weeks to access primary care psychology services was recently approved.

HSE SECH Disability Services have advised that there are 3 WTEs in place in South Tipperary Disability Psychology Services. The provision of psychology posts is a priority for the HSE. Disability Services have advised that a candidate has accepted one of the two vacant posts and is due to commence in October 2021. The other post vacant as a result of maternity leave has been approved for filling and the HSE SECH is working to fill this post in line with HSE recruitment policy.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeanne Hendrick', written in a cursive style.

Jeanne Hendrick
A/Head of Service-Primary Care
South East Community Healthcare