



5th October 2021

Deputy Thomas Gould
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.
Email: thomas.gould@oireachtas.ie

Re PQ 45228/21

To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing alcohol related health interventions in the State in each of the years 2020 and 2021.

Dear Deputy Gould,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your 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 cost of alcohol related health interventions is a complex question as these interventions are provided by many areas of our healthcare system. The HSE Alcohol Programme in HSE Health and Wellbeing is engaged in a range of initiatives to prevent the harmful use of alcohol, including its www.askaboutalcohol.ie website and campaign, the 'Know the Score' curriculum for senior-cycle students, and supporting alcohol screening and brief interventions across healthcare settings through the 'Making Every Contact Count' programme. Alcohol treatment services fall under the remit of HSE Social Inclusion, Primary Care, and is provided through a network of HSE services, but also non-statutory/voluntary agencies, many of which are funded by the HSE. Some private organisations also provide treatment. In addition, other areas of the HSE provide services to clients with problem alcohol use including Primary Care, Mental Health, Acute Hospitals Services and Emergency Departments.

I have selected some key alcohol related interventions and summarised them below, as well as providing information on the estimated cost of delivering them in 2020 and 2021, where available.

HSE's Ask About Alcohol website and campaign

The HSE's Ask About Alcohol website and information campaign launched in 2017 with activity including radio, digital advertising, materials, social media and paid search and activations. AskAboutAlcohol.ie is the trusted source of alcohol information and advice from the HSE, with tools to help people understand the impact that alcohol has on their health and find relevant services. The [Drinks Calculator](#) helps people to quickly check the impact of alcohol on their health, wealth and wallet and the [Self-Assessment Tool](#), based on the Audit-C, a validated tool for screening, gives a low to high risk score and follow up with advice and information. Every page of content contains details for the HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline for confidential information and support. A range of information materials are also available and are circulated through healthcare facilities and partner organisations. Social media and paid search advertising from the HSE focus on getting people to the tools and advice available on askaboutalcohol.ie.

In 2020 and 2021 to date, there were 460,000 visits to askaboutalcohol.ie with 66,000 completions of the Self-Assessment Tool and 27,000 completions of the Drinks Calculator.

The spend on the Ask About Alcohol website and campaign was €54,245 in 2020 and the budget for 2021 is €67,000.

HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline

The HSE Drugs & Alcohol Helpline provides support, information, guidance and referral to anyone with a question or concern related to drug and alcohol use and/or HIV and sexual health. This confidential service has both a freephone Helpline (1800 459 459) and an email support service (helpline@hse.ie). The service is non-judgemental and offers space to talk about your situation, to explore some options and to consider your needs. During calls/ emails, staff refer to a database of over 400 services nationwide.

The number of alcohol-related calls and emails has significantly grown in recent years and in 2020, alcohol contacts accounted for 50% of all contacts. In 2020 and 2021 to date, 3,860 alcohol calls and emails have been answered.

The budget for the Helpline was €136,000 in 2020 and is €144,000 in 2021.

Alcohol Treatment Services

The majority of alcohol treatment services are provided by services that also cater for clients with other substance use problems. As such, it is not possible to extract the cost of providing alcohol treatment from overall budgets.

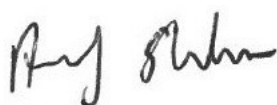
In 2020, the total allocation for HSE Addiction Services and HSE Section 39 funding was €106,768,174. An additional €8.35 million funding made available in 2021 for the HSE's National Service Plan. This includes the establishment of a dedicated community based alcohol service in Galway city. In addition, €1.08 million is being invested in 2021 under Sláintecare Healthy Communities to establish two new Integrated Alcohol Services to provide counselling and supports to adults with problem alcohol use and to their families.

In 2020, the number of cases reported to the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS) with alcohol reported as the main reason for seeking treatment was 5,824. This represents 38% of all drug and alcohol treatment cases in 2020. Of these cases, 43% were new cases and 66% were classified as alcohol dependent. Polydrug use where individuals were identified as mixing other drugs with alcohol occurred in 23% of cases. Data for 2021 are not yet available.

Please note that the NDTRS is a health information system that collects anonymous data about drug and alcohol treatment cases in Ireland. The data is case based, which means that there is a possibility that individuals appear more than once in the database, for example where a person receives treatment at more than one centre or at the same centre more than once per year. The data reflects assessments and entries into treatment (new cases and previously treated cases returning to treatment) and does not include the number of cases continuing in treatment from preceding years.

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

Yours sincerely,



Dr Aisling Sheehan
National Lead HSE Alcohol and Mental Health and Wellbeing Programmes, Health and Wellbeing, Strategy and Research