



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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Deputy Nessa Hourigan
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.

28th January 2022

PQ Number: 3780/22

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the progress made to date in relation to the Programme for Government commitment to ensure that mental health services are accessible to persons in the deaf community; and if he will make a statement on the matter- Neasa Hourigan

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Mental Health Service for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

Deaf people encountering severe anxiety, depression or mental health problems can access services through their local community mental health teams. Specialist input is required if deaf people with mental health issues are to have access to accurate diagnosis, effective treatment and follow-up by their local Community Mental Health Teams.

Community liaison mental health services for the deaf have commenced in line with the Scottish Model of service for deaf people. The service is a tertiary referral service for severely deaf people who use either Irish sign language or those who are culturally deaf and is based on a hub and spoke model. The hub of the service is a multidisciplinary team in line with the community mental health team and is located in the Deaf Village in Cabra. The spokes of the service are mental health Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) based in three other regions of the country to provide the service nationally.

As part of the enhancement of services for deaf and hard of hearing people Dr. Aidan Collins, Consultant Psychiatrist was appointed in January 2021. Of the three approved CNS posts, only one post was accepted with no further candidates on the panel. The two CNS posts were subsequently re-advertised in 2021. The CNS in post has engaged in sign language courses. Two nurses have been recruited to mental health services for the deaf. The team secretary is also in place as well as a number of interpreters for patient referrals.



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Referrals

The Liaison Community Mental Health Services for the Deaf have been accepting referrals and seeing patients since April 2021. Referrals are accepted nationally for those with moderate to severe mental health symptoms for those over 18 years and under 65 years.

Dr. Collins has developed close links with Mr. David Buxonat in CHIME and there have been regular meetings. Dr. Collins is providing advice and direction to CHIME staff as well as consultant colleagues nationally.

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

Yours sincerely,

Jim Ryan
Assistant National Director - Head of Operations
National Mental Health Services