



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.

T 01 6207304 R: jim.ryan1@hse.ie

Head of Operations, Mental Health Service
St Loman's Hospital, Palmerstown, Dublin 20

Tel: 01-6207304 Email: jim.ryan1@hse.ie

Deputy Róisín Shortall.
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.

28th January 2022

PQ Number: 63391/21

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he is giving consideration to extending the national counselling service along with the provision of the necessary extra resources in order to provide therapeutic support for the large number of the grieving families who have lost loved ones in difficult circumstances in nursing homes as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic; and if he will make a statement on the matter - Róisín Shortall

Dear Deputy Shortall,

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.

The HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) is an essential part of HSE mental health provision. It provides a professional, confidential, counselling and psychotherapy service, is available in all HSE Community Health areas and operates from over 240 locations throughout Ireland.

National Counselling Service provision incorporates the Counselling in Primary Care Service, counselling for adults who have experienced childhood abuse as well as counselling for former residents of Mother and Baby Home institutions.

The HSE National Counselling Service provides Bereavement Counselling through its Counselling in Primary Care Service at level 3 and 4 in line with the Adult Bereavement Care Pyramid (Irish Hospice foundation, 2020). The pyramid can be found here <https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Adult-Bereavement-Care-Pyramid.pdf>

The HSE NCS also provides additional bereavement counselling services as part of the HSE Psychosocial response to COVID 19 in CHO's 1, 2, 5, 8 and 9. Service provision has included counselling for family members who lost loved ones who were resident in nursing homes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Details of services available for those experiencing bereavement as well as services offered by the NCS are outlined below.



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Level 1 - HSE Public Health Information Campaign

The HSE website details useful information and resources for the general public in relation to grief and bereavement and also links services users to bereavement see www.hse.ie/grief

Level 2 - Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) Bereavement Support Line

The, which is staffed by trained volunteers provides a listening and support service. This service is available Mon-Fri 10am- 1pm -1800 80 70 77. The NCS has collaborated with the IHF who can signpost callers to HSE counselling services where appropriate.

Level 3 - Counselling in Primary Care (CiPC)

The HSE NCS Counselling in Primary Care service CIPC is available in each county of Ireland. CIPC provides:

- Generic counselling for mild to moderate psychological distress
- It is accessible to GMS patients only
- Referral by GP or other health professional
- Initial Assessment and 8 session counselling contract is offered
- Bereavement/Loss is a significant reason for referral to CIPC. In a recent study, almost one third of clients identified bereavement as the reason they sought counselling with CIPC. (HSE CiPC Research Group (In Press) Changing Lives for the Better: A national Evaluation of the Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC)

Level 3 - Bereavement Counselling Service for family members bereaved during the COVID 19 Pandemic

Dedicated Bereavement Counselling Services are currently provided by the HSE National Counselling Service in CHO 1, 8, 5, and 9 as part of the HSE Psychosocial response to COVID 19: This offers a Bereavement Counselling Support Service to family members bereaved during the pandemic:

- Specialist Bereavement Counselling Service
- Available to both GMS and non-GMS patients
- Clients can self-refer or be referred by a GP/Health Professional

Level 4 - Specialist Trauma Informed Bereavement Counselling

- The NCS provides Trauma Informed Bereavement Counselling for more complex cases in some CHO areas (CHO 1, 8 and 9).
- This service is available to both GMS and non-GMS patients.
- Clients can self-refer or be referred by a GP/Health Professional



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Individuals may be referred or self-refer to the NCS at different points in their bereavement journey. The NCS offers a stepped-care approach depending on contextual factors of an individual's circumstances. In the immediate aftermath of bereavement, support is the most appropriate intervention which includes listening and validation, information provision, activating existing family and community resources.

Bereavement counselling is generally offered when a person's usual coping resources available from family, friends and community are not sufficient to support them or where a bereavement is complex. Research indicates that it is generally not advised to offer bereavement counselling in the first 6 months following a bereavement, as it may pathologise or interfere with the normal grieving process.

Contact details for HSE NCS CIPC and bereavement services can be found at:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/counsellingpc/>

Provision of dedicated counselling services developed during the COVID pandemic will be reviewed in light of ongoing demand and need. Service delivery will be provided in line with the HSE Psychosocial Response to the COVID 19 Pandemic and subject to available resources.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/mentalhealth/hse-psychosocial-response-to-the-covid19-pandemic-2020.pdf>

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