



Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin,  
Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.  
R: [PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie](mailto:PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie)

Head of Operations, Mental Health Service  
St Loman's Hospital,  
Palmerstown, Dublin 20.  
Email: [PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie](mailto:PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie)

Deputy Seán Haughey,  
Dail Eireann,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

22<sup>nd</sup> August 2022

**PQ Number: 37475/22**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the roll-out and development of specialist eating disorder teams; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - Seán Haughey**

---

Dear Deputy Haughey,

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.

Eating disorders have the highest mortality and morbidity within mental health and they pose significant health, social and economic cost to people with eating disorders, to their families and to society. Early intervention, evidence based care, and consistent support make a profound difference to the clinical and personal recovery of people who are affected by eating disorders, including to those in adolescence when so many eating disorders begin.

In January 2018 the HSE published a National Model of Care for Eating Disorders (MOC) in partnership with College of Psychiatrists' of Ireland and Bodywhys. In the absence of a pre-existing dedicated eating disorder infrastructure or strategy, this Model of Care document has been developed in order to guide the provision of high quality, accessible and value for money eating disorder services in Ireland. Key recommendations include the development of a national network of dedicated eating disorder teams embedded within the mental health service, a stepped model of outpatient, day patient and inpatient care provision based on clinical need, and the development of a skilled, trained workforce. In the context of the significant physical morbidity associated with eating disorders, this Model of Care also recommends a strong integration between primary care, mental health services and medical teams, including the bridging of the acute hospital and mental health service divide through mutual clinical commitments and shared pathways.

Most people can and do recover from eating disorders if they receive effective, evidence based treatment from ED trained staff. While a small number of people benefit from more intensive treatment through day programmes or inpatient care, the most effective treatment setting is in the community. The MOC has a core focus on developing regional community based specialist eating disorder services provided by skilled multidisciplinary teams.

The NCPED aims to establish an ED network (8 adult teams and 8 CAMHS teams) in accordance with the agreed Model of Care 2018. There are currently 3 eating disorders (ED) specialist teams in operation, 2 CAMHS teams serving Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CHO4) and Community Healthcare Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow (CHO7) and an adult team in Community Healthcare East (CHO6). These multidisciplinary teams provide specialist eating disorder assessment and treatment in the community and are the foundations of delivering quality eating disorder care across the stepped model of care. CAMHS ED team staffing is recommended at WTE 14.4 per 500,000-600,000. Adult ED Team staffing is recommended at WTE 13.4 per 500,000-600,000.

Since 2016 over €8 million has been made available for Eating Disorder posts through programme for government funding. This has resulted in the set-up of the 3 existing Eating Disorder teams and to progress recruitment for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of teams in CHO4 (adult), CHO9 (adult) and CHO2 (CAMHS). This 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of teams are in advanced stages of recruitment and set up to establish a high quality service. All posts allocated have been recruited except for Consultant Psychiatrist. Medical recruitment is a challenge within the health service and we continue to work with the CHOs to address this in the short term and with NDTP for a longer term solution. The 2022 funding released in April is being used for the continued investment in specialist Eating Disorder posts including a 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of specialist community team development in 2022 CHO5 Adult, CHO1 Adult and CHO9 CAMHS. The NCPED recently successfully secured funding from Womens Task Force to recruit medical and paediatric consultants within acute hospitals to work with existing and future community eating disorder teams.

The NCPED recommends delivering 3 eating disorder teams per year to ensure sustainable phased recruitment and training. The HSE is provided funding on a yearly basis as per the estimates process for the National Service Plan. We plan to seek funding for 3 teams each year in 2023 and 2024 with the final team in 2025. It is estimated that each team will cost 1.4M for the staff, education and training funding will also be required and local CHO s will need to plan for capital costs to allow for suitable accommodation for each team in line with the schedule of accommodation in the model of care.

In addition to the community ED teams there are plans for an 8 bed inpatient unit as part of the National Childrens Hospital. A sub group of Sharing the Vision is reviewing acute adult inpatient bed provision including the provision of beds for adults with eating disorders (25 beds recommended in MOC). We are awaiting the publication of this review.

The development of a skilled experienced workforce in eating disorders is a key recommendation of the MOC. The NCPED has worked to develop online and face to face training and education for all clinicians including supervision in evidence based treatments. This will be paramount as newly recruited teams become operational and delivering services. As the eating disorder network continues to grow we will continue to convene biannual Eating Disorder Team network days to support training and shared learning. As part of EDAW 2022, the NCPED in collaboration with National Clinical Programmes for acute medicine, emergency medicine and paediatrics hosted a webinar "Recognising and Managing Medical Emergencies in Eating Disorders. Over 500 + clinicians accessed this webinar.

Each of the eating disorder teams collects clinical and activity data, this data is collated and each year a summary of the data is published on our webpage. All this data can be accessed at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/mental-health/eating-disorders/resources/>

Bodywhys, The Eating Disorders Association of Ireland are partners of the NCPED. Since its foundation in 1995, Bodywhys have been passionate about advocating for an eating disorder service in Ireland. The MOC for eating disorders recognises as crucial, a committed collaborative partnership between Bodywhys, the HSE and the mental health services, in developing structures to support recovery, at all levels of the stepped care model.

In March 2019 the HSE launched the first Self Care App for Eating Disorders which provides valuable information for those with or people caring for someone with an eating disorder. The HSE self-care app is public facing and has been downloaded 10,858 times with over 170,000 page views. It was developed in collaboration with BodyWhys.

Since the onset of the COVID pandemic there has been a significant rise in presentations of eating disorders across health care settings in Ireland. This is a similar pattern being reported internationally. Children, adolescents and adults are presenting more medically unwell with more severe clinical presentations than prior to the pandemic. Referral rates to existing community eating disorder teams have significantly surpassed predicted demand and capacity estimates made prior to the pandemic. Given this increase in demand a review of the Model of Care is planned during 2022/23. The outcomes of this review will influence the ED teams' requirements from 2024 onwards.

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

Yours sincerely,



---

**Dr Amir Niazi**  
**National Clinical Advisor & Group Lead for Mental Health**  
**Clinical Design and Innovation**  
**Health Service Executive**