

21st July 2022

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ ref 37716/22

“To ask the Minister for Health if he has satisfied himself with the level of mental health supports that are in place for persons with eating disorders in the County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Moynihan,

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.

There are two regional Eating Disorders services funded via the National Clinical Programme Programme for Government (PfG) money.

The first is CAREDS which is the Child and Adolescent Regional Eating Disorder Service for Cork and Kerry. They provide specialist eating disorder care for young people under the age of 18 years who have an eating disorder. They are part of the HSE National Clinical programme for Eating Disorders (NCPED) and CAMHS in Cork and Kerry and work closely with mental health, medical teams, liaison psychiatry and general practitioners to provide specialist eating disorder care across the region. This service accepts referrals from CAMHS, medical consultants and General Practitioners.

CAREDS is based in Fastnet House, Model Farm Road, Cork and offers both a day programme and an outpatient services lead by Dr. Sara McDevitt. I outline below a breakdown of the team by staffing category;

Staffing category	WTE
Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist	1.0
Nursing	3.0
Administration	2.0
Senior Social Worker	1.5
Senior Psychologist	1.0
Speech & Language Therapist	0.5
Senior Registrar	1.0
Registrar	0.5
Clinical Co-ordinator	0.5
Paediatrician	0.3
Senior Dietician	1.0
Hospital Dietician	1.0
Total	13.3

The second is new PfG funding to develop an Adult Eating Disorder team in Cork and Kerry. Recruitment for these posts was initiated earlier this year and a number of campaigns are underway at this point to recruit the staffing required for this specialist team. A four-year implementation plan has been approved to allow for phased recruitment and training. The availability of skilled staff is a significant issue in mental health services where demand outstrips supply in both the national and international contexts.

I outline hereunder a breakdown of the approved posts by Staffing Category.

Staffing Category	WTE
Consultant General Adult Psychiatrist	1.2
Senior Registrar	1.0
Registrar	0.5
Clinical Nurse Specialist (Mental Health)	3.0
Senior Social Worker	1.0
Psychologist, Senior Clinical	2.0
Occupational Therapist, Senior	1.0
Occupational Therapist, Senior	0.1
Occupational Therapist, Senior	0.5
Senior Dietician	1.0
Clinical Specialist Dietician	0.1
Admin	2.0
Total	13.4

As with other consultant vacancies the recruitment of the team Consultant has been difficult. A consultant had accepted a temporary post and was due to start in post in May but withdrew 2 weeks in advance of the start date. The permanent post is due to be re-advertised on Public Jobs. As an interim measure, we have again advertised for this post via HSE and also have alerted agencies to this requirement. Until a consultant lead is recruited for the Adult eating disorder team other members of the multidisciplinary team who have been recruited to date have been reassigned and some are operating in a model similar to a “hub and spoke” team model. For example, the Psychologists and NCHD are working within various general adult teams where they are prioritising eating disorder patients and offering therapeutic interventions with these patients. Once the Consultant post is filled and taking into account that this is a new team, there will be a short period of time required for this team to prepare Standardised Operational Procedures etc. and for the new team to operate safely and start accepting referrals

Children and adolescents with an eating disorder diagnosis who require inpatient treatment can be referred to one of the CAMHS inpatient approved centres. Referrals are reviewed individually to determine the likely clinical benefits of admission as well as possible other treatment alternatives. There are 4 CAMHS Units across the HSE; Linn Dara, Dublin, St Josephs in Dublin, Eist Linn in Cork and Merlin Park, Galway.

The HSE also funds patients in specialist private facilities. Decisions are made based on individual clinical need (as assessed by the local mental health team) and the prioritisation of available funding.

In March 2019 the HSE launched the first Self Care App which provides valuable information for those with or people caring for someone with an eating disorder. A self-care app for people:

- with an eating disorder
- caring for someone with an eating disorder



- worried about developing an eating disorder
- diagnosed or are recovering from an eating disorder


In addition to the above, the HSE provides funding annually to Bodywhys to run the helpline which is delivered by a team of trained volunteers. They also provide a range of services (support groups, online groups, email and family programmes) for adults and young people with eating disorders, and their families. Their support details are as follows:

- Helpline 01 2107906 Monday, Wednesday and Sunday from 7.30pm to 9.30pm and Saturday from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Contact alex@bodywhys.ie for support anytime. Visit www.bodywhys.ie
- The HSE also supports Bodywhys to run the [PiLaR](#) (Peer Led Resilience) Programme, a 4-week online modular based programme for parents, friends and carers of a person with an eating disorder to build resilience and gain support in their role as a supporter/friend. Contact pilar@bodywhys.ie for information on PiLaR

Anyone who is concerned about an eating disorder should discuss it with their GP in the first instance. Their GP can offer medical assessment, support and information on treatment options including referral to community mental health team.

I trust the above clarifies the queries raised.

Kind Regards,



Mr Hugh Scully
A/General Manager
Mental Health Services
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare