



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,  
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Deputy David Cullinane.  
Dail Eireann,  
Dublin 2.

25<sup>th</sup> August 2022

**PQ Number: 40722/22**

**PQ Question:** To ask the Minister for Health further to PQ 1625 of 14 June 2022, the estimated cost of trebling the National Counselling Service whole-time equivalent workforce to reach the staffing levels required in the assumptions regarding universal coverage; the current and projected WTE staffing requirements by grade to achieve this; the current WTE staffing by grade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -David Cullinane

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Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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.

Answering the questions outlined in PQ 40722/22 is dependent on having an understanding of a number of important factors which could influence the potential range of costs to provide universal access to counselling. These factors include: availability of suitably qualified counsellor/therapist workforce, engagement with counselling and psychotherapy training programmes, sponsorship programmes, provision of training placements, to ensure a future supply of appropriately qualified staff; provision of sufficient business support; recruitment of senior counsellor/therapists in order to ensure robust clinical governance as well capital costs which may be incurred in order to ensure access to appropriate accommodation from which to deliver the service.

In context of above it is difficult to provide an exact estimate of costs of required or projected workforce numbers required to achieve universal coverage of counselling by the HSE. However for high level budgetary purposes please see estimated costing below.

#### **Estimated Costing –Universal Access to Counselling**

Currently the NCS CIPC service is available to the adult GMS population only and receives on average 17,660 referrals per year. If eligibility was expanded to allow universal access by the general adult population it is estimated that:

- A threefold increase in budget allocation for counselling would be required



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- A threefold increase in demand for the service would at a minimum require a tripling of counsellor/therapists from current staffing level of approximately 200 counsellor/therapists [employed and contract] to 600 minimum
- Senior Counsellor/Therapist posts would be required to ensure clinical governance. It is planned to recruit 20 Senior Counsellor/Therapists in 2022 – in the context of universal access to counselling a high level estimate is that a minimum of 60 additional senior counsellor/therapists would be required
- Business support needs include adequate administrative support to ensure efficient service provision [addition of 3 grade IVs per service [30] and grade VII per service [10]

Item		Estimated Costing €
WTE Counsellor/Therapist Salary - midpoint on scale (7 <sup>th</sup> point)	62,000 x 400	24,800,000
WTE senior Counselor/Therapist [midpoint]	71,272 x 60	4,276,320
WTE Grade VII [midpoint]	51,637 x 10	510,637
Grade IV [midpoint]	35,838 x 30	1,075,140
Accommodation rental costs per year [estimated average cost]	100,000 x 10	1,000,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>31,662,097</b>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hr-circulars/1-october-2021-consolidated-salary-scales.pdf>

Please note the figures above are not inclusive of Employers PRSI etc.

The term Universal Counselling is extremely broad and NCS and CIPC have specific criteria that potential Service Users have to meet in order to be accepted for Counselling. It is very difficult to estimate the demand for Counselling across the Population without Medical Cards.

More detailed analysis would be required to provide an accurate estimate of costs of implementing the service infrastructure required to enable the HSE NCS to deliver universal counselling as recommended in the Sláintecare report.



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I trust this information is of assistance to you

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Ryan'.

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