



Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
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Deputy Duncan Smith,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

7th July 2022

PQ Number: 32640/22

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of consultant general adult psychiatrists employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter – Duncan Smith

Dear Deputy Smith,

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 cornerstone of mental health service delivery in secondary care is the multi-disciplinary Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). Multi-disciplinary CMHTs enable a range of professional perspectives to be brought to bear in case formulation, care planning and ultimately, service delivery. They enable integrated care for service users predicated on supporting them in their own recovery in their own community. This approach is in line with our mental health service strategy, *Sharing the Vision*, and fits squarely into overall health service strategy, as set out through *Slaintecare*.

Where the predecessor to STV, *A Vision for Change*, was prescriptive on the composition of multi-disciplinary teams, STV recognises that in line with changes in best practice and to enable future flexibility in terms of service delivery as best practice continues to develop, additional competencies are recommended for multi-disciplinary teams, to complement the core skills and competencies. That's why in addition to core skills like psychiatry, social work, clinical psychology and occupational therapy, additional competencies like dietetics, peer support, outreach and job coaching, for example, may be appropriate and required. Rather than be specific on numbers and structure, a flexible approach can be more responsive to local needs, which empowers local responses and helps achieve recovery-oriented outcomes.

Under STV, we envisage an expansion of mental health service provision overall. Clearly, this will entail analysis of skill mix requirements which in turn, will require comprehensive workforce planning. To achieve this, the HSE, in conjunction with the Department of Health is developing a Health and Social Care Workforce Planning Strategy and Workforce Planning Projection Model, based on international best



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practice. In addition, reforms under Sláintecare are centred on having sufficient capacity in the workforce and the appropriate configuration of staff and skill-mix, which are integral to improved service delivery, including that for Mental Health.

According to the Mental Health Service Employment Report May 2022 (see table below) there is a total headcount of 416 consultants equating to a whole time equivalent of 379. This is a 7.4% (26 WTE) increase since December 2019. It is expected that further growth will occur in line with developments anticipated in Service Plan 2022. Of note, 73 WTE are assigned to CAMHS services, with the remaining 306 WTE assigned to general adult mental health services.

| Staff /Group | Category | WTE Dec 2019 | WTE Dec 2020 | WTE April 2022 | WTE May 2022 | % Change since 2019 | Dec | No. May 2022 |
|--------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|-----|--------------|
| Consultants | | 353 | 370 | 384 | 379 | +7.4% | | 416 |

In terms of increasing capacity, the HSE has doubled the number of Higher Specialist Training (HST) posts to graduate this year (in July) from 22 to 46. The HSE is organising for these graduates to meet HSE Heads of Service and Executive Clinical Directors (ECDs) in Community Health Organisations (CHOs) around the country, in order to enhance the linkages with graduates in terms of vacancies and opportunities.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Mc Cusker
General Manager
National Mental Health Services