



12th July, 2022

Deputy Thomas Gould, TD
Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

Re PQ No. 33122/22

To ask the Minister for Health the average length of stay in recovery housing by facility in the years 2015 to date in tabular form.

Dear Deputy Gould,

I refer to your above Parliamentary Question which had been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

It is not possible to distinguish between step-down and other types of treatment provided in residential services within the National Drugs Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS) (see information about the NDTRS and exclusion criteria in appendix).

However, for the Deputy's information analysis is provided below based on number of cases where discharge information was available at the time of analysis¹.

Once the exclusion criteria as outlined above were applied, 11,766 cases were included in this analysis between 2015 and 2020. Over the period the median length of stay was 31 days, this indicates that half of cases were treated for more than 31 days (see below table). The average (mean) length of stay in this period was 57 days.

Table: Length of stay (days) for treatment of problem use of alcohol or other drugs, in residential services (excluding detoxes and detoxification services) by year, NDTRS 2015 to 2020							
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Median	31.00	31.00	31.00	31.00	31.00	31.00	31.00
Mean	61.24	63.44	53.94	51.58	52.91	57.35	57.03

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

¹ These figures will be subject to change as and when more discharges are recorded and included in the dataset.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Doyle', written in a cursive style.

Joseph Doyle
National Lead, Social Inclusion

Appendix

Introduction

The NDTRS is the national epidemiological surveillance database that records and reports on treated problem drug and alcohol use in Ireland (www.hrb.ie/data-collections-evidence/alcohol-and-drug-treatment/). Established in 1990, the NDTRS is maintained by the National Health Information Systems (NHIS) of the Health Research Board (HRB) on behalf of the Department of Health. For the purposes of the NDTRS, treatment is broadly defined as any activity which aims to ameliorate the psychological, medical, or social state of individuals seeking help.

Treatment for problem alcohol and drug use in Ireland is provided by statutory and non-statutory services, including residential services, community-based addiction services, general practices and prison services.

For the purpose of the NDTRS, treatment is broadly defined as ‘any activity which aims to ameliorate the psychological, medical or social state of individuals who seek help for their substance misuse problems’. Clients who attend needle-exchange services are not included in this reporting system. From 2004 onwards, clients who report alcohol as their main problem drug have been recorded by the system. These data have been presented in an earlier paper in the HRB Trends Series (Fanagan et al. 2008). Drug treatment options include one or more of the following: medication (detoxification, methadone reduction, substitution programmes and psychiatric treatment), brief intervention, counselling, group therapy, family therapy, psychotherapy, complementary therapy, and/or life-skills training.

Compliance with the NDTRS requires that data be collected for each new client coming for first treatment and for each previously treated client returning to treatment for problem drug use in a calendar year.

One main problem must be specified for each treatment episode and up to four additional problems can be added.

Staff at the NHIS unit in the HRB process the data, which are analysed and reported at national and EU levels.

Types of cases included in the NDTRS

The main elements of the reporting system are defined as follows:

All cases treated – describes cases who receive treatment for problem drug and/or alcohol use at each treatment service in a calendar year, and includes:

All cases assessed only- describes cases who were assessed but who did not progress to treatment

Previously treated – describes cases who were treated previously for problem drug/alcohol use at any treatment service and have returned to treatment in the reporting year;

New cases treated – describes cases who have never been treated for problem drug/alcohol use; and

Status unknown – describes cases whose status with respect to previous treatment for problem drug/alcohol use is not known.

Each case refers to an episode of treatment. Therefore 'previously treated cases' could appear more than once in the data, in a calendar year, if for example they receive treatment at more than one service or at the same service more than once per year.

NDTRS does not publish figures of five or less to ensure that an individual cannot be inadvertently identified.

Exclusion criteria

Cases treated in residential detoxification services or who received a detox in a residential service have been excluded from this analysis.

The figures reflect assessments and entries into treatment (new cases and previously treated cases returning to treatment) and do not include the number of cases continuing in treatment from preceding years.