

8th April 2022

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 16978/22

“To ask the Minister for Health the measures that are being considered to resolve the staffing issues for the child and adolescent mental health services, especially now given the Ukraine crisis expected increase demands on the service for Cork city and county; 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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services provide specialist mental health treatment and care to young people up to 18 years of age, who have moderate to severe mental health disorders that require the input of a specialist multi-disciplinary mental health team. There are a total of eight sector based community mental health teams in Cork and two sector based teams in Kerry. The CAMHS community based teams are supported by Eist Linn, Child and Adolescent Inpatient Unit.

All referrals received to CAMHS services are triaged in a timely manner and the referral is either accepted or rejected at that point. There are two types of referral; an urgent referral and a routine referral. Every effort is made to prioritise urgent referrals so that young people with high risk presentations are seen as soon as possible and this is often within 24 to 48 hours. This may impact on wait times for cases that are considered, by a clinician, to be less severe. Please see table below of each sector in Cork CAMHS waiting list breakdown as of February 2022

As you may be aware, there are long-standing workforce challenges and although additional investment has been approved for some community services, the ability to recruit and retain the community workforce is an on-going significant issue. These workforce challenges have grown over the last 2 years as a result of competing priorities to deliver essential programmes of work including vaccination services, test and trace services, the implementation of key policies as well as on-going operational challenges of winter, the COVID response and the cyber-attack. It is acknowledged that the number of people on waiting lists for treatment or assessment exceeds Sláinte Care waiting time targets. It is also important to note that Cork CAMHS in common with all CAMHS services nationally has been experiencing difficulties in recruiting and retaining the services of CAMHS doctors in recent years. Management in Cork Kerry Mental Health Services have been taking every measure to acquire the necessary resources, clinical and otherwise to ensure a quality service for the children of Cork going forward.

The commitment to Sláinte Care has been reconfirmed in the Programme for Government and the overall budget 2021 has invested in staffing and infrastructure so as to enhance the permanent capacity of our health services and expand the scale and range of services to be provided in the community. A project team has been established in Community Operations with senior national representation from all Care Groups to oversee the further development and implementation of waiting list initiatives. The project team will collaborate with CHO colleagues and partners in acute services, procurement, NTPF and the Department of Health with a key goal to address waiting list issues. In addition to this, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare have confirmation of funding for a new initiative which will commence in 2022, a CAMHS Hub Pilot. Provision for this new referral option is outlined in Sharing the Vision, A Mental Health Policy for Everyone, 2020.

In addition to the above, recruitment is underway for two additional posts within our sector teams, a Senior Speech and Language Therapist in North Lee North and a CAMHS Social Worker will be spread across South Lee B and C teams. It is also important to note that Cork Kerry Mental Health Services are proactively seeking to increase the number of HST posts as a way to 'grow your own' medical specialists, HST is a pathway for NCHDs (Non Commissioned Hospital Doctors) to pursue a CAMHS specialty.

With regard to the unfortunate current crisis in Ukraine, please note Mental Health needs of this vulnerable cohort are being assessed through the Area Crisis Management Team – Ukraine Response subgroup. I can assure you that any ongoing requests for further supports from Mental Health Services are also addressed.

I trust the above clarifies the queries raised.

Kind Regards,



Mr Kevin Morrison
A/Head of Service
Mental Health Services
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare