



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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,  
Palmerstown, Dublin 20.  
Email: [PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie](mailto:PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie)

Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor.  
Dail Eireann,  
Dublin 2.

31<sup>st</sup> May 2022

**PQ Number: 25176/22**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost to educate healthcare workers including general practitioners on the best way to provide weight-inclusive care to all and provide supports for more eating disorder resources including shorter mental health waiting times, more specialist services to refer to and time for initial general practitioner consultation – Jennifer Murnane O'Connor**

---

Dear Deputy O'Connor,

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.

Eating disorders have the highest mortality and morbidity within mental health and they pose significant health, social and economic cost to people with eating disorders, to their families and to society. Early intervention, evidence based care, and consistent support make a profound difference to the clinical and personal recovery of people who are affected by eating disorders, including to those in adolescence when so many eating disorders begin.

In January 2018 the HSE published a National Model of Care for Eating Disorders (MOC) in partnership with College of Psychiatrists' of Ireland and Bodywhys. In the absence of a pre-existing dedicated eating disorder infrastructure or strategy, this Model of Care document has been developed in order to guide the provision of high quality, accessible and value for money eating disorder services in Ireland. Key recommendations include the development of a national network of dedicated eating disorder teams embedded within the mental health service, a stepped model of outpatient, day patient and inpatient care provision based on clinical need, and the development of a skilled, trained workforce. In the context of the significant physical morbidity associated with eating disorders, this Model of Care also recommends a strong integration between primary care, mental health services and medical teams, including the bridging of the acute hospital and mental health service divide through mutual clinical commitments and shared pathways.

Most people can and do recover from eating disorders if they receive effective, evidence based treatment from ED trained staff. While a small number of people benefit from more intensive treatment through day programmes or inpatient care, the most effective treatment setting is in the

**Building a Better Health Service**

CARE COMPASSION TRUST LEARNING

community. The MOC has a core focus on developing regional community based specialist eating disorder services provided by skilled multidisciplinary teams.

The development of a skilled experienced workforce in eating disorders is a key recommendation of the MOC. The NCPED has worked to develop online and face to face training and education for all clinicians including supervision in evidence based treatments like CBTE, Family Based Therapy (FBT), and MANTRA. This will be paramount as newly recruited teams become operational and delivering services. As the eating disorder network continues to grow we will continue to convene biannual Eating Disorder Team network days to support training and shared learning. The NCPED has been supported in the rollout of training and education from central Mental Health Budget. Training and education costs will increase as new teams come into operation. It is difficult to estimate an exact cost.

The NCPED in association with ICGP developed ***Eating Disorders: Guide to assessment and management in Primary Care. This guide published in 2021 is for*** general practitioners to enhance the diagnosis, assessment and management of patients with Eating Disorders in the primary care setting. The Clinical Lead has participated in online webinars with ICGP on the topic of Eating Disorders.

Bodywhys, The Eating Disorders Association of Ireland are partners of the NCPED. Since its foundation in 1995, Bodywhys have been passionate about advocating for an eating disorder service in Ireland. The MOC for eating disorders recognises as crucial, a committed collaborative partnership between Bodywhys, the HSE and the mental health services, in developing structures to support recovery, at all levels of the stepped care model. The HSE provides funding annually to Bodywhys which provides a range of services (support groups, online groups, email and family programmes) for adults and young people with eating disorders, and their families. They also have an extensive education and resources for professionals including GPs, dentists and teachers on their website. Bodywhys has extensively increased its support services since the onset of the pandemic and information on all their services are available on their website <https://www.bodywhys.ie/>

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



---

**Dr Amir Niazi**  
**National Clinical Advisor & Group Lead for Mental Health**  
**Clinical Design and Innovation**  
**Health Service Executive**