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Deputy Jim O'Callaghan,
Dail Eireann,
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Dublin 2.

18th October 2022

PQ Number: 50794/22

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the services and beds that are available in the State for children and adults suffering from anorexia nervosa. – Jim O'Callaghan

Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

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.

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
- 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.

The National Clinical Programme for Eating Disorders (NCP-ED) aims to establish an eating disorder network (8 adult teams and 8 CAMHS teams) in accordance with the agreed Model of Care 2018. These multidisciplinary teams including nurses provide specialist eating disorder assessment and treatment in the community and are the foundations of delivering quality eating disorder care. Since 2016, over €8 million has been made available for ED posts through programme for government funding.

Three consultant-led multidisciplinary teams for eating disorders have been operating for a number of years in:

- Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CAMHS)
- Community Healthcare Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow (CAMHS)
- Community Healthcare East (adult)

We are pleased to confirm that Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City and County successfully completed recruitment of funded posts for adult outpatient ED services in September. They are now developing care pathways in line with the MOC and aim to accept referrals in Quarter 4 of 2022.

Two eating disorder teams in Community Healthcare West (CAMHS) and Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (adult) are at advanced stage of recruitment.

In addition, recruitment of three further teams has begun:

- South East Community Healthcare (adult)
- Community Healthcare Organisation Area 1 (adult)
- Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City and County (CAMHS)

Once established, this will see a total of nine specialist teams in place. 4 Teams will be dedicated to under 18 year olds.

A further seven teams are planned for in accordance with the Model of Care. The NCP-ED works closely to support recruitment in all Community Health Organisations where funding has been allocated. All sites are committed to filling the posts and creating community eating disorder teams. Once recruited teams are supported by NCP with training and education.

Children and adolescents with an eating disorder diagnosis who require inpatient treatment can be referred to one of the CAMHS inpatient approved centres. Referrals are reviewed individually to determine the likely clinical benefits of admission as well as possible other treatment alternatives. There are 4 CAMHS Units across the HSE; Linn Dara Approved Centre, Dublin, St Josephs Approved Centre in Dublin, Eist Linn Approved Centre in Cork and Merlin Park Approved Centre in Galway. Specialist eating disorder beds are available in Merlin Park Galway and Linn Dara AC. There are plans for an Eating Disorder Unit in the new National Children's Hospital which will provide 8 additional beds in 2025.

The 3 specialist inpatient beds currently operational and linked with the adult eating disorder team (for the catchment area of CHO 6) will remain within St Vincent's University Hospital acute psychiatric unit. Adults who have an eating disorder diagnosis and require inpatient care can be referred to any of the HSE's acute inpatient mental health-approved centres around the country. Adults presenting with an eating disorder can also be treated in an acute hospital if their physical health needs require this. Under National Mental Health Policy Documents and in line with MOC the number of adult eating beds will increase, including an additional 3 beds in St. Vincent's University Hospital, 5 beds in North Dublin, 5 beds in Galway, 5 beds in Cork and 2 short term beds one each in Limerick and Kilkenny. These beds will be linked to eating disorder hubs and provision will be in line with Sharing the Vision recommendations. A sub group of Sharing the Vision is reviewing acute adult inpatient bed provision including the provision of beds for adults with eating disorders (25 beds recommended in MOC). We are awaiting the publication of this review.

An estimated 188,895 Irish people will experience an eating disorder at some point in their lives (based on epidemiological projections). Approx. 1,757 new ED cases develop each year in Ireland in the 10-

49 age group. Females are at least 2-3 times more likely than males to develop an eating disorder. Since the onset of the COVID pandemic there has been a significant rise in presentations of eating disorders across health care settings in Ireland. This is a similar pattern being reported internationally. Children, adolescents and adults are presenting more medically unwell with more severe clinical presentations than prior to the pandemic. Referral rates to existing community eating disorder teams have significantly surpassed predicted demand and capacity estimates made prior to the pandemic. The NCPED recently successfully secured funding to recruit medical and paediatric consultants within acute hospitals to work with existing and future community eating disorder teams. Given this increase in demand a review of the Model of Care is planned during 2023. The outcomes of this review will influence the ED teams' requirements from 2024 onwards.

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. Bodywhys has extensively increased its support services since the onset of the pandemic and information on all their services are available on their website.

In March 2019 the HSE launched the first Self Care App for Eating Disorders which provides valuable information for those with or people caring for someone with an eating disorder. The HSE self-care app is public facing and has been downloaded 10,858 times with over 170,000 page views. It was developed in collaboration with BodyWhys. The App is due to be updated in partnership with BodyWhys.

The development of a skilled experienced workforce in eating disorders is a key recommendation of the MOC. Training and Education continues on a regular basis for clinicians within specialist eating disorder teams and also for clinicians working in generic mental health services with ED caseloads. The NCPED has worked to develop online and face to face training and education for all clinicians including supervision and support in the delivery of evidence based outcomes. Funding for this ongoing education is key to building a skilled workforce.

The NCPED remains committed to the continued expansion of eating disorder services in Ireland until everyone of all ages experiencing an eating disorder has equal access to assessment and treatment.

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
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