



Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin,
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Deputy Denis Naughten.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

07th November 2022

PQ Number: 52919/22

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the digital solutions that he is exploring to target CAMHS waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Denis Naughten

Dear Deputy Naughten,

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.

CAMHS provide specialist mental health service to those aged up to 18 years, who have reached the threshold for a diagnosis of moderate to severe mental health disorder that require the input of a multi-disciplinary mental health teams, such as moderate to severe anxiety disorders, moderate to severe depression, Bi Polar Affective disorder, Psychosis, moderate to severe eating disorders, self-harm that require the input of a multi-disciplinary mental health team.

Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, the HSE were exploring options in relation to telemedicine, in response to a European wide shortage of CAMHS Consultants, and a number of longstanding Consultant vacancies in CAMHS teams across the country. During the pandemic, in line with international best practice, the use of telemedicine was progressed and rolled out to both CAMHS and Adult Community Mental Health teams.

The MHID CAMHS team in Cork introduced telemedicine in 2019 to reduce the need for children with mental health and intellectual disability to travel to clinics, and allow for assessment in their own home, or in the school they attend. This was a very welcome development for families, a number of whom reported the travel to regular clinic appointments as extremely challenging for these young people and their families.

As part of the response to an ongoing Consultant vacancy in Kerry CAMHS and in line with recommendation 18 of the Report on the Look Back Review of CAMHS Area A, otherwise referred to as the Maskey Report (January, 2022) <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/south-kerry->



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[camhs-review/report-on-the-look-back-review-into-camhs-area-a.pdf](#), this telemedicine clinic approach was also extended to the North Kerry CAMHS Team on 4th April, 2022.

All children and families are given a choice as to whether they are happy to participate in a telemedicine clinic and are asked prior to the appointments to give their consent. If they do not wish to have a consultation by means of tele-clinic they are offered a face to face consultation with another Consultant as soon as this can be arranged. The team have a standardised operating policy in place to ensure that the tele medicine clinics operate in a clinically safe and effective manner. A clinically trained member of the CAMHS team is present in the room at the team base in Kerry with the child and parents throughout the consultation and feedback to date from young people and their parents has been positive.

The service is now established for 9 months and the team plan to evaluate the use of telemedicine in the coming weeks. I have attached an information letter and consent form which are given to all families involved in telemedicine in Kerry CAMHS which explains the above in further detail. Any expansion of the above mentioned scheme will be based on the evaluation.

The HSE are not rolling out any additional digital solutions in CAMHS teams to specifically target the waiting lists at this time. Children and young people who are referred and accepted by CAMHS will have or need to be assessed as having moderate to severe mental illness and often present with very complex treatment needs which can cross over more than one care group. Although the use of digital solutions to health needs are a useful intervention, for the most part their biggest benefit is in cases that are less complex and are widely used by HSE funded partners such as Jigsaw.

Currently, there is a CAMHS waiting list initiative taking place across the CHO's which has been focusing on the young people waiting for the longest time to gain access to assessment and treatment within. Since the roll-out of this initiative in June/July of this year, 273 children and adolescents have been taken off the CAMHS waiting lists through additional clinical resources being put in place to provide additional clinics and interventions.

CAMHS hubs Service Development

Under the new HSE Corporate Plan 2020-2023, the National Service Plan 2021, and in line with Recommendation 2 and 31 of Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone, HSE Mental Health propose to resource 6 CAMHS Mental Health Hubs to offer an alternative response to inpatient admission, when appropriate.

HSE Mental Health has committed to a programme of work to inform the development of CAMHS Hubs on a phased basis, involving the following:

- The development of a pilot Model of Care for CAMHS Hubs (2022)



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- Pilot testing and implementation of CAMHS Hubs across a number of sites, incorporating a rural/urban mix (2022-2024)
- Monitoring and evaluation of pilot site implementation (2022-2024)
- Monitoring and evaluation of key outcomes for service users, families and carers.

To provide brief mental health interventions to support CAMHS teams in delivering enhanced responses to children, young people and their families/carers, in times of acute mental health crisis.

A CAMHS Hub provides brief mental health interventions to support CAMHS teams in delivering enhanced responses to children, young people and their families/carers, in times of acute mental health crisis. When developed, CAMHS Hubs can provide an alternative to inpatient admission by ensuring the young person is supported in their own environment or an appropriate community facility and with the active involvement of family, carers and supporters. The support from these hubs will be time-limited, providing intensive intervention and support with sufficient flexibility to respond to different service user or carer needs.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

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

Tony McCusker
General Manager-
National Mental Health Services