



Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin,
Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.
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Deputy Peadar Tóibín.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

5th May 2023

PQ Number: 17711/23

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the steps his Department is taking to reduce the CAMHS waiting list. – Peadar Tóibín

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

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 services 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 multi-disciplinary mental health teams. CAMHS referral teams meet on a weekly basis to review all referrals and to assess the risk to the young person. There are two types of referral to CAMHS; 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; this is often within 24 to 48 hours. Severity of presenting symptoms affect waiting times - where waiting times for those with high risk presentations are shorter. This in turn may impact on wait times for cases that are considered, by a clinician, to be less severe.

Waiting lists vary across Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) areas. While some areas have relatively short waiting lists, regrettably waiting times are longer in other CHO's. Factors such as availability of specialist CAMHS clinicians, current vacancies and difficulties in recruiting in an international context can impact on wait times in various areas. CAMHS waiting lists are also impacted by capacities in other parts of the system - where young people may not receive early intervention and thus their needs escalate necessitating referrals to specialist CAMHS.

Significant work is underway within CAMHS to offer the best possible service to young people, and many changes have been implemented. The HSE is actively working to reduce the CAMHS waiting list and there are a number of service improvement initiatives taking place as a result of the Maskey Report and Mental Health Commission Interim report as well as a specific waiting list initiative that commenced in 2022 and will continue into 2023. In 2022, 750 additional young people were seen from the waiting list following



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additional once-off funding being made available from June to December. For 2023, new additional funding has been secured, again on a once-off basis and it is hoped that this additional resource will help with further reducing the waiting lists in CAMHS.

In addition the recruitment process for the new role of Assistant National Director (A.N.D.) for Child and Youth Mental Health is at an advanced stage. This key new role, supported by a dedicated team will provide leadership, operational oversight and delegated management of all service delivery across child and youth mental health services in Ireland. The A.N.D. will be responsible for managing and coordinating service planning activities, partnership and capacity building, the development of service plans, and setting of service standards right across child and youth mental health services in Ireland. In addition the recruitment process for the new role of National Clinical Lead for Youth Mental Health is also near completion.

In recent years, the HSE have advertised nationally and internationally for CAMHS professionals, and have engaged with international recruitment agencies with little success due to worldwide shortages in the field. In order to address this, the HSE is seeking to fully utilise opportunities offered by telehealth technologies to mitigate recruitment challenges and modernise delivery of mental health care. In addition, National Mental Health have committed to a programme of work to inform the development of the CAMHS Telehealth Hub initiative 2021-2024 on a phased basis, informed by testing and monitoring. This body of work includes:

- The development of a pilot Model of Care for CAMHS hubs
- 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

Despite the service improvement initiatives outlined above, it is important to note that specialist CAMHS are not suitable for everyone. Young people with mild to moderate mental health difficulties can access support at Primary Care level either through the HSE or through a range of organisations fully or partially funded by the HSE. Organisations that provide education and other support/clinical interventions at primary care level for young people and their families include;

1. Jigsaw who are funded by the HSE to provide early intervention mental health services which focus on the needs of 12-25-year-olds. Staffed by fully-trained professionals across a number of disciplines, Jigsaw provide a range of community based mental health services for young people experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties. During the pandemic they adapted their service models to ensure continuity of support by delivering therapeutic interventions by phone and online.



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2. Text 50808, funded by the HSE, was formally launched in June 2020. The service provides immediate support for people going through mental health or emotional crisis. By the end of the year the service was providing over 5,000 'conversations' per month to support people of all ages.

3. The HSE also support online counselling providers MyMind.org and Turn2Me who provide counselling and psychotherapy to young people.

4. SpunOut.ie provide articles and information for young people on many different topics including mental health on their website spunout.ie

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Mc Cusker'.

Tony Mc Cusker
General Manager
National Mental Health Services