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Deputy Neasa Hourigan.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

3rd May 2023

PQ Number: 19485/23

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide information on the commencement and funding of the Model of Care for Specialist Mental health Services for Older People; and if he will make a statement on the matter. – Neasa Hourigan

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

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.

The population of older people (age 65 and over) in Ireland is projected to increase more than 3 fold between 2006 and 2046 (i.e. from 460,000 to 1.4 million). Mental health problems are very common in this age group with 10% suffering from clinically significant depressive symptoms, 5% with dementia over the age of 65 and a far higher prevalence in those over 80 years. Other disorders are equally common with anxiety present in 13%, either alone or in association with depression, alcohol misuse in up to 4% and schizophrenia in 1%.

Mental health problems are associated with increased morbidity and mortality, either because of the direct effects of mental illness (e.g. suicide) or indirect effects complicating physical illness. This underscores the need to develop specialist mental health services for older people to focus on the diagnosis and treatment of the full spectrum of mental illness for this age group.

The Model of Care for Specialist Mental Health Services for Older People – which concerns itself with the provision of specialist mental health services for older people and how they interact with and complement general medical services for older people in primary and secondary care – makes recommendations in relation to the service and its staffing (with recommendations on staffing of specialist community teams and Psychiatry of Old Age Liaison Services for Acute Hospital), facilities, training, service interfaces, and governance.

Pending the resourcing of dedicated Programme Management support to implement the Model of Care, work is ongoing by the National Clinical Lead to implement Recommendation number 5 and 6 from the Model of Care: development of Community Mental Health Teams to meet the

recommendations from 'A Vision for Change' implementation plan, and the development of Psychiatry of Old Age Liaison Service in line with the staffing recommendations outlined, following the evaluation of the roll-out of demonstration sites.

A dedicated annual budget of €1.124m has been identified to support the roll-out of four pilot demonstration sites associated with Recommendation 6 (Support to Nursing Homes and Liaison services in acute hospitals). There is ongoing assessment of Recommendation 5 (National gap analysis, identifying wte requirements needed per 10,000 people over 65 to complete Community Mental Health Teams as per a Vision for Change recommendations). This will allow accurate costing to inform further roll out.

The Model of Care Recommendation 6 is currently being implemented in these four demonstration sites. The first quarterly group meeting for sites was held in February 2023. A Model of Care Implementation Oversight Group for the National Clinical Programme for Older People, Part 2 is also currently being developed. This Group is being convened to oversee a programme of work to implement the Model of Care, focusing initially on Recommendation 6. The Group will be multidisciplinary and include senior management representation to facilitate integration with Older Persons, Primary Care, Chronic Diseases and NGOs.

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

Yours sincerely,



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Clinical Design and Innovation
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