



Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin,
Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.
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St Loman's Hospital,
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Deputy Mark Ward.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

2nd August 2023

PQ Number: 35325/23

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the number of young people referred to CAMHS, by CHO area, in 2020, 2021, 2022 and to date in 2023; the number of referrals accepted and refused; the reason for refusal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Mark Ward

Dear Deputy Ward,

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 is a specialist clinical service for people under 18 with moderate to severe mental health difficulties. It is not for everyone; only a small percentage (approx. 2%) of the population would require access to this service. Every effort is made to prioritise urgent referrals so that young people with high risk presentations are seen as soon as possible and this is often within 24 to 48 hours. This may impact on wait times for cases that are considered, by a clinician, to be less severe.

Referral and Access to CAMHS

When deciding if a child or adolescent needs to attend CAMHS, a number of factors are considered by the CAMHS team. These include consideration of the child or adolescent's clinical presentation, their level of social and family support and the availability of resources and treatment options at primary care level or within community networks. It is the role of the CAMHS team to decide if the child or adolescent reaches the threshold for community CAMHS, i.e. whether their mental disorder is moderate to severe.

Moderate to Severe Mental Disorders

Mental disorders are often described on a continuum of severity, ranging from mild to moderate to severe. A number of factors are taken into account when defining whether someone has a moderate to severe mental disorder and these include the diagnosis, formulation, the duration of the symptoms and level of functioning in daily living.



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In practice the term *moderate to severe* means that the mental disorder is severe enough to cause substantial distress to the child or their family or others. The child or adolescent would have a significant impairment in functioning in various aspects of their life including development, family relationships, school, peers, self-care and play or leisure activities.

Referral Criteria

Children or adolescents referred to community CAMHS must fulfil the following criteria:

- The child or adolescent is under 18 years old.
- Consent for the referral has been obtained from the parent(s).
- The child or adolescent presents with a suspected moderate to severe mental disorder.
- Comprehensive treatment at primary care level has been unsuccessful or was not appropriate in the first instance.

Appendix 1 as attached provides detail on the number of Referrals Received/ Accepted to CAMHS. Data on the reasons why referrals are not accepted by CAMHS teams is not collected nationally.

Further information on referral and access to CAMHS can be found by consulting with the CAMHS Operational Guidelines. Please see below:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/camhs/operational-guideline/camhs-operational-guideline-2019.pdf>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Mc Cusker', written over a horizontal line.

Tony Mc Cusker
General Manager
National Mental Health Services