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Deputy Pauline Tully,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

8th August 2023

PQ Number: 36375/23

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health for an update on the progress in developing national gender clinics and multidisciplinary teams here for those under the age of 18 years; if a consultant psychiatrist in child and adolescent psychiatry has been recruited to develop the service; if recruitment of a consultant psychiatrist is necessary to develop this service; the reasons this is necessary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. – Pauline Tully

Dear Deputy Tully,

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.

Ireland has enacted legislation that enables transgender people to achieve full recognition of their preferred gender and allows them to acquire a new birth certificate that reflects that change. A Model of Care (MoC) for all transgender services was developed by the HSE between 2014 and 2016. As a result significant funding was allocated to develop services in Ireland.

For Adults the current service is based at Loughlinstown Hospital, which forms part of the Ireland East Hospital Group (IEHG) and work closely with St. John of God services, through which a Consultant Adult Psychiatrist is employed. The Endocrine and Mental Health Services work very closely together.

For Children under 18, A Paediatric Endocrinologist was appointed to Children's Health Ireland (CHI) and located in Crumlin Hospital. Resources were also allocated to recruit a multidisciplinary CAMHS transgender service in Ireland. So far we have not succeeded to establish a specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) transgender service in Ireland, though attempts continue to be made to recruit an expert to fill this post. Some of the efforts that have been tried so far include,

- Advertising this post in Ireland three times without success.
- Contacting services in England for the recruitment of this post.

- Tried to look at other options including Liaison Psychiatrists with special interest in transgender.
- Tried to create ASPIRE fellowship positions to train our own psychiatrists.
- Tried to create Higher specialist training post in transgender.

Because there is no local specialist service, children or young people who require specialist psychological assessment are referred to the single NHS specialist service in the Tavistock and Portman Trust through the HSE's Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS). The TAS is a HSE scheme that allows public consultants refer patients to public health services in other countries for a service that they consider necessary for their patients and where that service is not available within the Irish health service. In the current MOC, it is a recommendation that this multidisciplinary team should be led by a Consultant Psychiatrist and this is also one of the learnings from the review of this service in United Kingdom.

When issues were raised regarding the service at Tavistock and Portman trust, we worked closely with Prof Hilary Cass who was appointed to review this service. We also conducted our own review and found that Ireland has mitigated some of the risks highlighted in the Cass report by proactively providing care at primary and secondary level. In our model of service delivery, Primary care and secondary care CAMHS teams around the country screen, assess and treat children/young people who express gender dysphoria. After treating or ruling out any comorbid mental health issues, patients are referred through treatment abroad scheme to Tavistock. Also as a result of the review there is a phased transfer of cases from Tavistock to new centres in the UK. To that end a triage system is now in place whereby Tavistock no longer accepts direct referrals. Since November 2022 all referrals are reviewed by a Board and directed to one of the new centres. There are two early adopter / first stage centres in the NHS: one is a partnership between Alder Hey and Manchester Children's Hospital and one is a partnership between Great Ormond Street Hospital, Evelina London Children's Hospital and the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation.

Also in Ireland as an outcome of this review and increase in the referral rate of these cases, the HSE is establishing a group to develop an updated model of care for the treatment of gender dysphoria. The aim is that this group will be led by an expert clinician from a relevant specialty who will oversee this process and ensure widespread stakeholder engagement. The goal is to develop a person-centred model of care and invest in an integrated service that meets the needs of transgender people in Ireland.

We have also agreed close working relationship with UK regarding Research, training and recruitment in this area

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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