**HSE**

**Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta**
**Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte**

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile
Phámar,

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Deputy Emer Higgins.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

8th February 2024

**PQ Number:    49010/23**
**PQ Question:    To ask the Minister for Health if he will respond to reports of high and unmanageable stress levels amongst CAMHS staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Emer Higgins**

Dear Deputy Higgins,

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.

There are many different types of support available for HSE staff who have concerns about their own mental health, these include supports for HSE staff working in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Many of the supports linked below are provided by agencies which are funded by the HSE. Most of these services can be accessed without a referral.

https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/services-support/supports-services/

Most people can get the help they need through their GP or the HSE's partner organisations, however a GP referral is required for access to specialist mental health services for those with long-term or complex mental health difficulties. The GP is first port of call for advice on how to access mental health services and information on mental health supports in your area.

Specific supports available for HSE staff include the following:
• The HSE Employee Assistance Programme
• Occupational Health Department
• Workplace Health & Wellbeing Unit

**Employee Assistance Programme**
The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides confidential counselling support and a referral service for all staff with personal or work-related difficulties.  Advice and guidance is also available to Managers to support them in managing staff welfare issues.  The employee assistance service also provides formal structured support to groups of staff who have experienced stress as a result of a critical incident in the workplace.

A wide range of issues is managed by the EAP, including:
• Stress at work
• Difficult relationships at work (including bullying)
• Traumatic events (e.g. assault, suicide)
• Addictions

- Personal issues outside of work (e.g. bereavement, relationships) which is provided on a confidential basis
- Professional assessment
- Personal support
- Counselling
- Referral onwards to other professional resources where appropriate
- Trauma Support

Additionally, the service:

- Participates in the provision of lectures / training as required, in areas where the employee assistance professional has relevant expertise, e.g. stress management, post-trauma support, team building and management training
- Provides feedback to the organisation on broad issues which may enhance employee wellbeing and the organisation's effectiveness

The service is provided by trained and experienced counsellors who are professionally qualified and bound by the codes of conduct to the professional bodies to which they belong. There are three pathways by which an employee may access EAP:

- An employee may self-refer
- An employee may be referred by Occupational Health
- An employee may be referred by line management

Matters raised in individual cases are strictly confidential and are not discussed with managers. EAP is a free service and is available to all HSE employees. Further information can be found here:

https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/employee-assistance-programme-staff-counselling/

**Occupational Health Department**
The Occupational Health Department aims to promote and maintain the physical, mental and social well-being of employees. The department looks at how work and work surroundings may affect people's health and also how their health may affect their ability to cope with their work.

Functions and Services available to staff include:

- provision of medical advice on issues where work is affecting health and/or health is affecting work
- providing independent, impartial medical advice taking into consideration employees' health problems that will assist both the employer and employees in securing treatment or rehabilitation as appropriate
- advising on fitness for work at an early stage
- providing health surveillance to employees considered to be at risk in the workplace
- monitoring the health of employees after an accident or illness as appropriate
- providing occupational health advice in the management of attendance
- providing information to employees regarding support services available. e.g. counselling support
- promoting employee health and wellbeing

HSE staff can self-refer to this service. Self-referrals are confidential and the staff members Line Managers are not informed of the referral. Further information can be found here:

https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/occupational-health/

**Workplace Health and Wellbeing Unit**
The Workplace Health and Wellbeing Unit aims to improve the general health and wellbeing of staff in the Health Services and support more people with health conditions to stay in work.  It works to create healthier workplaces, improve occupational health services and rehabilitation support, and increase employment opportunities for people who are not in work due to ill health or disability.  It aims to implement all elements of a positive workplace, including appropriate supports for both staff and management in relation to stressors in the workplace.

Further information on resources available to HSE staff working in CAMHS can be found here:

https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/complaints/ysysguidance/supporting-staff/resourcesforstaff.html

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

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**Paul Braham**
**Senior Operations Manager (Area DON)**
**National Mental Health Services**