



13<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Bernard J. Durkan, TD  
Dáil Eireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2.

**PQ Number: 49243/23**

**To ask the Minister for Health the extent to which persons in need of drug rehabilitation programmes have access to same, with a view to reducing their dependency on drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Durkan,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

Since my last reply to you on this topic in June, I can inform you that a further €1.8 million of additional funding was made available for Tier 4 residential addiction treatment services for the purchase of additional treatment episodes across the country. This will benefit individuals requiring residential treatment.

The response that an individual requires in relation to a drug related problem will depend to a certain extent on the specific substance that they are having problems with and the extent of their dependence or use of the substance. In this regard, any individual requires an assessment in the first instance. There would be a number of options available to individuals to access this assessment. They could attend their General Practitioner for a discussion about their problem and their GP may arrange for a further referral to a Substance Use service. These are operated in all CHO areas by the HSE and referral pathways are available. If for example, if an individual is identified as having an Opioid Dependence then arrangements will be put in place to access that person onto an Opioid Agonist Treatment programme utilising either methadone or buprenorphine based products. The individual may also benefit from the provision of psychological therapy either through a brief intervention or a structured counselling programme. These are available in the local area.

There are also a significant number of services operated in the community by Drug and Alcohol Task Forces under a Service Level Arrangement (SLA) with the HSE. There are 10 regional and 14 local Drug and Alcohol Task Forces operating in the country covering all areas. The task forces were developed to combat the threat from problem drug use throughout the country through the use of an



area-based partnership approach between the statutory, voluntary & community sectors including public representatives. The structure is intended to facilitate the development of effective, targeted, local responses through the utilisation of the knowledge and experience of all sectors in designing and delivering those services and through facilitating the improved co-ordination of service provision.

Information in relation to the availability of service can be accessed through a directory of services available on drugs.ie <http://www.services.drugs.ie/>.

A person may also contact the HSE-operated, free Drug and Alcohol Helpline 1800 459 459. This number provides access to a trained addiction counsellor who can discuss the person's issues in a confidential manner and make an onward referral to an appropriate local service. The service also has an email (helpline@hse.ie) that people can access out of hours and a confidential response will be provided.

Therefore, whether the individual with the drug related problem requires medication assisted treatment, counselling based support or indeed residential treatment through the network of detoxification and rehabilitation beds available nationally, the first step would be to contact the local services for an assessment through the supports and mechanisms described above.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



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Prof Eamon Keenan  
National Clinical Lead - Addiction Services