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15<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Ms. Joan Collins TD  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**RE: PQ Ref 43615**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health to provide an update on the establishment of a National Psychology Placement Office; and the funding for this establishment, including staff costs. -Joan Collins**

Dear Deputy Collins,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to 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.

Leading on from a review of Eligibility Criteria for staff and senior grade psychologists in 2016, an Implementation Group was established to implement the revised standards. In December 2020 the National Psychology Project Team, chaired by Dr Cathal Morgan, completed the *Report of the National Psychology Project Team: Establishment of a National Psychology Placement Office and Workforce Planning*. The Report sets out proposals to establish a national psychology placement function within the HSE, and outlines considerations for a workforce plan for psychological services in the HSE. At the time of publication of the report and subsequently, no funding to support implementation of the recommendations was made available.

Significant challenges affect the majority of the Health and Social Care Professions (HSCP) including psychology, with regard to securing the mandatory practice placements which are an essential element of education programmes for HSCP. A key factor is the severely limited supports for practice placements and challenges with regard to recruitment and retention of HSCP. These issues have been documented in the *Report on Health and Social Care Professions Practice Education During and Post-COVID-19 (HSE National HSCP Office, 2021)* which includes 12 Health and Social Care Professions. Capacity for placement is the leading constraint in increasing student numbers to increase workforce supply.

In 2022 proposals were submitted by the HSE to address the identified placement challenges for Health and Social Care Professions including psychology. These plans include the establishment of a regional infrastructure for HSCP, including posts to co-ordinate and lead developments for HSCP with a particular a focus on practice placements and practice/professional development. This structure and associated provision of tutors will assist implementation of the psychology report and address wider critical practice placement issues across the Health and Social Care Professions, while recognising the interrelated requirements, to avoid duplication and maximise economies of scale. The HSE is leading a number of work streams focusing on assuring quality of practice placements, increasing engagement with practice education, and governance agreements.

The supports and resources described above are necessary to increase capacity for practice education to meet requirements of current, and the additional HSCP student numbers and psychology trainees necessary to meet the needs of the health and social care services, and requires investment in 2024 and beyond.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

National Lead  
National HSCP Office

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