



Oifig an Stiúrtóra Náisiúnta Cúnta
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

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Deputy Mark Ward.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

1st March 2024

PQ Number: 45169/23

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health his views on the statement within a review (details supplied) which states that “that 92.7% of urgent CAMHS cases were responded to within three working days”; and if he will make a statement on the matter. –Mark Ward

Details supplied: *Independent Review of the Provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the State carried out by the Mental Health Commission.*

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 provide specialist mental health services to those aged up to 18 years, who have reached the threshold for a diagnosis of moderate to severe mental health disorder that require the input of multi-disciplinary mental health teams.

Process following receipt of Referral by CAMHS

As per the CAMHS Operational Guideline (2019), when a referral is received from the list of approved referral agents, it is screened by a member of the CAMHS team, such as the Team Coordinator, in consultation with the Consultant Psychiatrist. Referrals are screened daily during working hours (Monday to Friday 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.). All new referrals are discussed at a weekly team meeting.

If the referral form does not include adequate information, the CAMHS team may contact the referral agents and other relevant contacts such as parent(s), schools and HSE Primary Care services to request additional information. This information is used to best inform levels of risk, need and functioning in different settings. Consent must be obtained from the parent(s) prior to contacting other agencies. When a referral has been screened, it is then categorised into the following categories:

- Emergency
- Urgent
- Routine
- Not appropriate for CAMHS



Referral Response Times

Community CAMHS teams provide a timely response to all referrals received, dependent on their categorisation of emergency, urgent, routine or not appropriate for CAMHS. In the CAMHS Operational Guidelines a response means that *“contact is made with the referral agent and parent(s) by a clinician on the team, in consultation with the Consultant Psychiatrist. The contact should seek to provide information to the referral agent or parent(s) so that they understand the status of the referral and any steps they need to take prior to the first appointment”*.

Urgent Referrals

An urgent referral is one where there is a clear and present level of acute symptoms of mental disorder and where there is a strong likelihood of considerable deterioration in mental state if left untreated. Urgent referrals are responded to within three working days of receipt of referral and seen as soon as possible based on clinical risk. CAMHS teams should have a mechanism to respond to urgent referrals on a daily basis within working hours (Monday to Friday 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.) This can be done, for example, by the Team Coordinator or the Consultant Psychiatrist or through a triaging function. Responding to an urgent referral may mean the direct involvement of the CAMHS team or it may mean, for example, telephone consultation with the parent(s) or other agencies to organise an appropriate response to the referral agent.

Further information can be found by consulting with the CAMHS Operational Guidelines which is available here: <https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/ncr/camhs-operational-guideline-2019.pdf>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sarah Hennessy'.

Sarah Hennessy
General Manager
Child and Youth Mental Health Office