



Office of the Head of Service Mental Health
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Mr David Cullinane T.D.
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin

26th June 2024

PQ 24901/24

To ask the Minister for Health the number of authorised officers currently available for assisted admissions within the health service in Waterford city and county; if he considers this an adequate number; the steps he will take to ensure there is an adequate number of authorised numbers officers available in Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

I have reviewed the matter and following is the current position.

An “Authorised Officer” (AO) means an officer of the HSE who is of a prescribed rank or grade authorised by the Chief Executive Officer to exercise the powers conferred by Section 9 of the Mental Health Act 2001 to act as an applicant for involuntary admissions to a mental health approved centre.

Authorised Officers aim to make a positive contribution to service delivery and service user experience in facilitating the least restrictive alternative to involuntary admission to hospital.

There is currently one Authorised Officer in HSE Waterford Mental Health Service available for Assisted Admissions. South East Community Healthcare (SECH) MHS acknowledge that this is an insufficient number to meet service needs. This is a national issue as other areas are experiencing similar challenges with numbers and capacity.

HSE/SECH MHS want to ensure that there is availability of Authorised Officers - this matter has been raised locally and escalated to national level.

Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine O'Donohoe'.

Ms Catherine O'Donohoe
Acting Head of Service - Mental Health
South East Community Healthcare