

25th June, 2024

Ms. Holly Cairns, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 24905/24

“ To ask the Minister for Health the reason the waiting-list initiative in operation in the Cork primary care child and adolescent psychology services; the date this initiative commenced; how it differs from standard efforts to work through waiting-lists in those services; if it constitutes a separate waiting-list; and if so, the number of clients and wait-times that apply to it. ”

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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.

In the summer of 2021, the National Primary Care Office sought proposals for Waiting List Initiatives across all Local Health Organisations in respect to clients waiting in excess of 52 weeks.

In Q3 2021 Cork Kerry Community Healthcare Primary Care Psychology was allocated funding for a waitlist initiative to address the longest waiting children as priority. Funding equivalent to 3.0 WTE professional psychologists, 2 assistant psychologists and supporting administration was approved and accommodation was secured for this bespoke initiative. Recruitment commenced in Q4 2021, however recruitment was challenging with respect to the 3 professional psychology posts.

The initiative commenced in October 2021 with 1.0 WTE administration and 0.8 WTE staff grade psychologist seconded from North Lee core services. Primary care psychology may involve brief and/or lengthy periods of intervention with direct and indirect pathways based on needs and within the context of available resources.

The waitlist initiative targeted those longest waiting but unlike core service the service model in the initiative was limited to brief intervention (inclusive direct and indirect pathways), i.e. not exceeding 6 session blocks and it was a 2 phased model:

Phase 1: (review/validation call for allocation if consented to), followed by
Phase 2 (Initial Assessment/Planning Session) followed by 6 session block.

Clients who attend as part of the waitlist initiative who have outstanding needs after brief intervention are returned to the core Local Health Organisation area and waitlisted accordingly for further intervention.

The waitlist initiative was allocated an initial list of those longest waiting clients i.e. 180 children on psychology waiting lists across Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CKCH). Regular updates to National Office and local CKCH management were provided in respect of activity and recruitment. Monthly CIF returns included activity from core service and Waiting List Initiatives and the numbers waiting reflected those not comprehended in the Waiting List Initiatives and those children having completed a brief intervention in the Waiting List Initiatives and awaiting further intervention.

Year	No. Contacted	No. Responded	Removed WL – Treatment	Removed WL – Other reason	Total % Removed
2022	184	130	84	32	89
2023	144 of which 80 were newly allocated*	103	81	21	99

The activity through 2022 targeted 180 children who had been waiting for psychology services since 2018/2019. In 2023 a further 80 children were allocated to the Waiting List Initiative Team. The professional psychologist staffing level to Waiting List Initiative reduced from Q2 through Q3 resulting in 0.5 WTE remaining by Q4 2023 which limited the capacity.

In late 2023 and ongoing, as a result of the recruitment embargo vacancies in new and development posts have not been filled nor has cover been achieved for statutory leave. Due to continued staffing deficits in psychology within core service and the WLI the emphasis in Q3 2023 through Q1 2024, has been in completing a waitlist validation exercise. The first phase of validation concluded in April, 2024 with 180 children discharged from those longest waiting in South Lee.

Regrettably staffing continues to be limited within the initiative and we are waiting derogation of posts in both core psychology services and the waitlist initiative.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Priscilla Lynch
Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare