

Deputy Pauline Tully
Leinster House
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

17th June 2024

PQ ref 19868/24

To ask the Minister for Health the actions he has taken to decrease waiting times for children and adolescents to access CAMHS in CHO1; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Pauline Tully

Dear Deputy Tully

I refer to your recent correspondence received to this office in relation to the above. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position of Cavan Donegal Leitrim Monaghan and Sligo (CDLMS) Mental Health Services:

CAMHS is a specialist service providing clinical assessments and therapeutic interventions for young people under the age of eighteen, who are experiencing moderate to severe mental health difficulties. It is not for everyone; only a small percentage (approx. 2%) of the population would require access to this service.

Donegal

CAMHS in Donegal have from the onset acknowledged that significant improvements are required for the service and have invested regionally funded resources in the absence of national funding. Donegal Mental Health Management team continue to advocate for additional funding for our CAMHS teams through the annual national service planning process. All of the teams are experiencing an increase in the volume and complexity of referrals, with services under pressure as demand continues to exceed capacity. Additional recurring investment is required to build capacity to keep pace with the growing demands and increased complexities experienced by our CAMHS teams. The Donegal Mental Health Management Team is committed to strengthening clinical governance and has decided to progress with the recruitment of a CAMHS Clinical Director and Practice Managers as key elements of the service improvement plan subject to national approval.

CAMHS have initiated a service improvement plan to improve the quality of service to children and young people who have moderate to severe mental health difficulties. Funding was received in 2021, 2022 and 2023 for this purpose. The Donegal Mental Health Management Team have agreed to fund a number of Quality Improvement Projects for the CAMHS service this year and are in the process of securing services through third party providers and private providers. The services will deliver interventions such as anxiety management, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) as well as the provision of individual support as appropriate. These initiatives will assist in wait list management and care planning. These interventions will be in addition to services delivered by CAMHS.

CAMHS also continues to respond to the most urgent and emergency cases which make up a large proportion of the referrals received; CAMHS also continue to liaise regularly with other mental health service providers in Donegal to ensure that the referrals received are directed to the most appropriate service which helps to reduce waiting time overall for CAMHS attendees.

The Donegal CAMHS Services are delivered by three multidisciplinary teams. Unfortunately, the Consultant Psychiatrist post for the South Donegal CAMHS team became vacant at the end of August 2023. Every effort is being made by the HSE Medical Manpower Office (HR) to recruit a replacement. The post was filled on a part time basis from January 2024 and will be filled on a full time basis from June 2024.

The CAMHS service are also pursuing the recruitment of a 4th Consultant Psychiatrist on a temporary basis through the additional funding allocated to the Quality Improvement Project as they feel an additional Consultant would be of benefit.

Cavan/Monaghan

As at the 30th April 2024 the waiting list in Cavan Monaghan CAMHS was twenty-four. The majority of these, twenty-two of them are for the South Cavan South Monaghan CAMHS catchment. This team has experienced high levels of absenteeism, mainly related to maternity leave, in the last eighteen to twenty-four months.

The Cavan Monaghan Mental Health Service Mental Health Management Team are hoping to initiate a targeted, time limited, intervention to triage the children and young people on the South Cavan South Monaghan waiting list. It is of note that currently the availability of suitably qualified and experienced staff is a challenge, but we are working to develop this for the 3rd or 4th quarter of 2024.

Sligo/Leitrim

There is considerable oversight and monitoring of the waiting list within the Sligo / Leitrim / West Cavan CAMHS team who have taken the following actions to decrease waiting times:

- Continuation of the Waitlist Initiative project which saw the removal of ninety-one patients from the waitlist in 2023 and is projected to result in the removal of one hundred and twenty patients in 2024.
- Weekly completion of Initial assessments from the waitlist by the CAMHS team.
- Monthly review of waitlist activity by the CAMHS Governance committee.
- A meeting with the Sligo / Leitrim GP Society by the CAMHS Clinical Lead and Clinical Coordinator to discuss appropriate referrals to CAMHS. This is in effort to ensure appropriate referrals of children with suspicion of moderate to severe mental health disorders.
- Establishment of a new CDLMS Service Improvement Committee which will oversee the service improvement plan developed from the recommendations of the Mental Health Commission review of CAMHS services and the recommendations from the National CAMHS Operational Guidelines Audit which include improvements in relation to access.

I hope the above information will be of some assistance however should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Pauline Ackermann
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Mental Health Services CHO1 CDLMS