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Le Lár Tíre, An Lú, An Mhí,

Coimpléasc Naomh Bríd, Baile Átha Fhirdia,
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MLM MH 123/2025

2nd April 2025

Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Re PQ ref 15313/25 To ask the Minister for Health the current waiting list time for counselling in the HSE national counselling service in the Louth/Meath area; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Ó Murchú

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 outlined the position as follows.

The HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) is a professional, confidential, counselling and psychotherapy service available free of charge in all regions of the country. It was established in Louth Meath in 2000 following the Taoiseach's apology in 1999 on behalf of the State for abuse of children in residential institutions. The service for adults who have experienced childhood abuse is known locally as Rian.

In 2013 the NCS expanded nationally to provide the Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) service to adults who hold a GMS card who may be experiencing mild to moderate psychological difficulties.

The CIPC model of service is aimed at providing early access to counselling. Clients are offered up to eight counselling sessions. Referral to CIPC is a written referral from the person's GP or member of their Primary Care Team.

The Rian service for adults who have experienced childhood abuse is for moderate to severe psychological difficulties and offers medium to long term counselling contracts. Referrals can be made by the person needing counselling themselves or by a health care professional.

Counselling to former residents of Mother and Baby Home Institutions.

In 2021 the National Counselling Service began offering counselling to former residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions as part of the Government agreed package of health and well-being measures. **There is no waiting list for this service.** The NCS in Louth Meath continues to prioritise these clients with immediate allocation to counselling if this is the client's choice.

In April 2024 following the inquest into the Stardust fire disaster the National Counselling Service began providing counselling to family members and those impacted by the Stardust.

There is no waiting list for this service. The NCS in Louth Meath prioritises these clients with immediate allocation to counselling if this is the client's choice.



Current Waiting Times for NCS Louth Meath

Current Waiting List & Typical Waiting Time

The current waiting times for NCS in Louth Meath CIPC and Rian Services, based on latest available data [28.2.25] are presented in Table 1 below.

In total there are 503 people waiting for counselling with the National Counselling Service, of whom 42% are waiting 3 months or less.

Table 1: NCS Louth Meath Waiting Times

Waiting Times at end Feb 2025	CIPC	Rian
Up to 1 month	76	11
1 – 3 Months	112	12
3 - 6 Months	126	30
6 Months +	99	37
Total	413	90

Waiting times for the NCS in Louth Meath vary across the health area depending on factors such as level of demand, staffing levels, availability of accommodation etc. The NCS is a demand led service with the counselling contract offered based on the assessed needs of the client. As the number of clients seeking counselling exceeds the number of counselling spaces available at any one time there is a waiting time for counselling.

The number of clients currently waiting is in the context of a year on year increase in referrals to, and demand for counselling. The NCS in Louth Meath experienced a 28% increase in referrals since 2022. This is combined with a current vacancy rate for counsellor/therapists of 20% which is significantly impacting waiting times in the area.

Table 1: Current waiting list NCS Louth Meath

Waiting Time	No Waiting at end Feb 2025 for NCS Louth Meath
up to 1 month	88
1 - 3mths	123
3 - 6 mths	156
6mths +	136
Total	503



I trust the above is in order. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours Sincerely,

Mairead O' Neill
Head of Services,
Midlands Louth Meath Mental Health Services