

27th March 2025

Deputy Pat Buckley,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 5557/25

“To ask the Minister for Health to take urgent action to address the crisis in mental-health care (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter.”

Details supplied: “In Cork City and County there are 336 adults on the waiting list for adult mental health services and 921 children and teenagers on the list for mental health services, many of whom have been on the list for over 12 months.”

Dear Deputy Buckley,

The Health Service Executive have been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted for the Minister for Health for a response and the following outlines the position.

In Budget 2025, the Government allocated an additional €16 million for the enhancement and expansion of mental health services. This includes suicide prevention, Traveller mental health, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), and the implementation of the Sharing the Vision strategy. A substantial increase in funding for mental health services is being provided through the **Sláintecare Programme**, which aims to transform and improve access to quality mental health care. This funding is directed towards expanding and enhancing community-based mental health services, reducing waiting times, and improving access to emergency mental health support.

The HSE South West acknowledges that mental health services face significant challenges, and we are committed to ensuring that people across the region receive the support and care they need in a timely manner.

In response to this, the HSE South West has put in place a number of measures to address these challenges and strengthen mental health services across Cork and Kerry. Key actions currently underway include:

1. **Crisis Intervention Services:** Mental Health services has prioritised the expansion of Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Teams (CRHTs) to provide intensive care and support for people experiencing acute mental health crises, allowing them to avoid hospitalisation and receive care in the community. There are 4 Crisis Resolution Teams/Home Based Crisis Teams in Cork located in Cork City North, South Lee, East Cork and North Cork. There are 4 Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurses (SCAN) co-located with primary care in Cork.
2. **Adult Mental Health Services:** All referrals are triaged with urgent referrals being prioritised. More than 75% of all referrals to adult services are seen within 12 weeks.
3. **Integration of Services:** We are working to integrate mental health services more closely with primary care, ensuring that individuals can access mental health support in their local communities and that mental health is prioritised in general healthcare settings.
4. **Public Awareness Campaigns and Training:** As part of our efforts to reduce stigma around mental health, we are implementing a number of public awareness campaigns and providing mental health



training for all healthcare professionals, ensuring they are equipped with the skills to identify and respond to mental health concerns at the earliest stages.

CAMHS

CAMHS community services in HSE South West are delivered across 10 community sector teams, as well as a specialist Child and Adolescent Regional Eating Disorder Services (CAREDS) team and a Regional Mental Health and Intellectual Disability team.

HSE South West provides a CAMHS Liaison Service at Cork University Hospital, the Mercy Hospital and University Hospital Kerry. We regret that young people cannot always access the CAMHS service as quickly as they or we would like. Management in the Mental Health Services are actively taking measures to acquire the necessary resources, clinical and otherwise, to ensure a quality service for the children of Cork & Kerry going forward.

Recruitment across CAMHS has been challenging recently. Every effort is being made to ensure vacant posts are filled as quickly as possible.

A regional ADHD waitlist initiative team has been developed to address those waiting longest for access to CAMHS ADHD supports across Cork and Kerry. This team accept referrals from community CAMHS teams for young people waiting longest for access to ADHD supports. Since its introduction in November 2023, 192 young people have been seen by this team.

HSE CAMHS Hubs have commenced implementation within selected HSE Community Mental Health Services across the country. These services will become an integral part of each community Mental Health Service in the future. This is an important step in the journey to provide modern, responsive and fit-for-purpose Mental Health Services.

The vision for CAMHS Hubs is “To provide intensive brief mental health interventions to support CAMHS Teams in delivering enhanced responses to children, young people and their families or carers, in times of acute mental health crisis”. CAMHS Hub will support Community CAMHS Teams by providing an enhanced level of brief intervention mental health support for children and young people aged up to 18 years, experiencing an acute mental health crisis, where it is determined the needs of the child or young person require a rapid response, time-bound intensive brief intervention. Funding has been allocated for these posts in Cork, and the HSE South West is currently in the process of recruiting for them. It is anticipated that the service will be operational by the second half of the year.

We are committed to making the necessary investments and implementation of long-term reforms to improve mental health services, ensuring that people receive the care they need when they need it. However, it is recognised that there is still much work to be done.

I trust the above clarifies the queries raised. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

Declan Cronin
Acting Head of Service
Mental Health Services