



Bainisteoir Ginearálta, An Lú, An Mhí  
Seirbhís Meabhairshláinte

Coimhléasc N. Bríd,  
Bóthar Cheanannais,  
Baile Átha Fhirdia, Co. Lú. A92 DRN0

General Manager Louth Meath  
Mental Health Service

St. Brigid's Campus,  
Kells Road,  
Ardee, Co. Louth. A92 DRN0

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

@hselive

☎ 041 685 9222

✉ [GM.MentalHealthLM@hse.ie](mailto:GM.MentalHealthLM@hse.ie)

18<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Erin McGreehan TD  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**RE: PQ ref 7324/25 - *To ask the Minister for Health to issue a review on the practices within the psychiatry unit at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda when an individual arrives seeking urgent treatment during a mental health crisis; and the actions that are taken to care for each individual to engage with and ensure that they do not leave the unit without being assessed by a suitably qualified person.***

Dear Deputy McGreehan,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) 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.

When a psychiatric patient presents to Accident and Emergency (A&E), they will undergo an initial assessment, and potentially a further assessment. They are treated, transferred, or discharged based on the severity of their condition and the resources available in the A&E department. If the patient is deemed to need specialised psychiatric care, they may be transferred to the Acute In-patient Unit (Drogheda Department of Psychiatry). There is a Liaison Team based in the Dochás Centre, Our Lady's Hospital, Drogheda Monday to Friday between the hours 9-5pm.

If an individual does not wish to engage in an assessment with a suitably qualified person, clinical staff do not have a legal right to ensure they do not leave the unit without being assessed.

The Assisted Decision-Making (ADM) (Capacity) Act 2015, supports individuals in making their own decisions, establishing a framework for legally recognised support arrangements, and respecting an individual's autonomy and self-determination. It provides legally binding healthcare directives where individuals can make decisions about their future medical care.

In addition, all healthcare workers must follow the HSE National Consent Policy, which ensures any persons with capacity must voluntarily give consent. Healthcare workers must ensure that the person understands their right to say yes or no to treatment, and to make a decision without feeling pressured.



Furthermore, The Mental Health Act 2021 sets out formal procedures which must be followed to admit someone to an acute psychiatric hospital against their consent as an involuntary patient. Please find the key points below:

***(A) Involuntary Admission Criteria:***

- A person may be involuntarily admitted to a mental health facility if they are suffering from a mental disorder and are deemed to be a danger to themselves or others, or if their mental state requires care or medical treatment for their own well-being.
- The mental disorder must seriously impair their mental function, requiring care or treatment, either in their own interests or the interests of others.
- The detention and treatment must be likely to benefit the person to a material extent.

***(B) Exclusion Criteria for admission under MHA:***

1. Drug or alcohol addiction: Solely being addicted to drugs or alcohol is not a basis for involuntary admission under the Mental Health Act.
2. Personality disorder: Having a personality disorder, or being socially deviant, is not a valid reason for involuntary admission.
3. Under the influence: A person who is currently under the influence of drugs or alcohol cannot be detained under the act.

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

Yours sincerely,

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Martina Lennon,  
General Manager, Mental Health Services, Louth Meath