



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar,
Baile Átha Cliath 20, D20 HK69

Office of the
Assistant National Director
Mental Health Operations

St Lomans Hospital, Palmerstown,
Dublin 20, D20 HK69

www.hse.ie
[@hselive](https://twitter.com/hselive)

e: PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie

Deputy Sorca Clarke
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

4th July 2025

PQ Number: 35448/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the number of additional therapy hours or sessions that would be deliverable under a €25 million increase in the talk therapy budget

Dear Deputy Clarke,

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 a response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone (2020) states that talk therapies should be considered a first-line treatment option for most people who experience mental health difficulties. The HSE provides or funds a range of talk therapy interventions at varying levels of intensity, both in community and primary care settings, and in specialist mental health services. Talk therapies are offered online or in person and may be delivered as an individual intervention or as a structured group programme, depending on individual preferences and need. The cost associated with a talk therapy intervention will therefore vary depending on the type of service provided. As an example, please see below the estimated increase in service provision with a €25 million increase in the budget for Counselling in Primary Care (CiPC).

The HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) provides a professional, confidential, counselling and psychotherapy service to adults and is available in all HSE Health Regions. In 2013, the remit of the NCS expanded with the establishment of the CiPC programme, which plays a critical role in providing nationwide access to counselling for medical card holders over 18 years of age. CiPC operates from over 240 locations situated throughout Ireland.

CiPC offers a structured counselling programme of up to eight sessions, in addition to an initial assessment. The service is offered through a range of modalities (face to face; online; phone) to ensure ease of access for clients. All counsellor/therapists meet minimum qualification criteria, including an accredited qualification in counselling or psychotherapy recognised by one of the professional counselling and psychotherapy bodies (the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, Irish Council for Psychotherapy, the Psychological Society of Ireland). Counsellor/therapists are either direct employees of the HSE or agency counsellors delivering



services under HSE supervision. Generally, services operate based on 60% direct employees and 40% agency counsellors, to ensure sustainability, flexibility and good clinical governance.

Building on the current service model and cost of agency counsellors, it is estimated in excess of 17,000 counselling programmes (consisting of 8 sessions plus an initial assessment per client) could be provided annually with a recurring €25 million increase in the budget for CiPC. It should be noted this estimate is based on currently available data and cost structures, is dependent on workforce planning to ensure availability of suitably qualified counsellor/therapists, access to appropriate accommodation and filling of current vacancies.

Please note, while the information above is based on an example of one approach to investment in talk therapies, i.e. through the CiPC service, there are of course a number of options and variations in approach to be considered. These include, but are not limited to, questions pertaining to overall service model, sustainability of services (e.g. agency versus direct employees or the use of third party providers), modalities (face to face; online; phone), and clinical governance arrangements.

Through the ongoing implementation of *Sharing the Vision* and in the context of annual service planning, the HSE is committed to increasing the accessibility of talk therapies across the population.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

General Manager – Policy Implementation
Access and Integration Mental Health Operations