



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta  
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar,  
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Deputy David Cullinane  
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Dublin 2.

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025

**PQ Number: 38147/25**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the median wait time for screening or assessment by counselling in primary care services in 2023, 2024, and to date in 2025. -David Cullinane**

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Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 the following outlines the position.

The HSE National Counselling Service provides Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) to adults experiencing mild to moderate psychological difficulties who present in the primary care setting. Currently all adults in receipt of a medical card are eligible for the service. CIPC is available in each HSE regional health area and provides up to eight counselling sessions with a professionally qualified counsellor/therapist. CIPC counsellors utilise a range of counselling interventions depending on presenting issues and assessed needs.

Depression and anxiety constitute the main reasons for referral to CIPC. It is generally accepted that 90% of mental health needs can successfully be addressed in primary care settings, and for many, CIPC provides a person-centred, high-quality service 'in the right place, at the right time', in line with the Sláintecare reform programme. For GPs, CIPC offers an alternative to medication for people presenting with mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

Currently CIPC service is available to the adult GMS population only. It receives on average 17, 660 referrals per year. Waiting times for CIPC vary across HSE Health Regions 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.

Current waiting times exist in the context of a year on year increase in referrals to, and demand for counselling with the NCS – there has been a 15% increase in referrals to the NCS since 2022. This is combined with a significant number of Counsellor/Therapist vacancies which negatively impact waiting times.



Please note waiting list data is not collated in the format as requested by the Deputy i.e. median wait times.

**Table 1** below details waiting times for screening/assessment in counselling in primary care for each HSE area by Quarter in 2023, 2024 and 2025. Q2 2025 data is not yet available.

**Table 1: CIPC Waiting times for assessment x Quarter 2023-2025**

CIPC Waiting Times		2023				2024				2025
	HSE Area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Wait time to be seen initial assessment - < 1 month	HSE Dublin & Midlands	158.0	75.0	149.0	127.0	151.0	81.0	98.0	49.0	80.0
	HSE Dublin & North East	141.0	153.0	161.0	77.0	161.0	150.0	142.0	59.0	164.0
	HSE Dublin & South East	85.0	139.0	79.0	11.0	100.0	104.0	85.0	71.0	83.0
	HSE Mid West	55.0	27.0	50.0	19.0	35.0	43.0	66.0	20.0	44.0
	HSE South West	105.0	95.0	129.0	52.0	64.0	76.0	88.0	60.0	82.0
	HSE West & North West	63.0	57.0	62.0	9.0	21.0	56.0	66.0	32.0	68.0
	<b>National Total</b>	<b>607.0</b>	<b>546.0</b>	<b>630.0</b>	<b>295.0</b>	<b>532.0</b>	<b>510.0</b>	<b>545.0</b>	<b>291.0</b>	<b>521.0</b>
Wait time to be seen initial assessment - > 1 month < 3 months	HSE Dublin & Midlands	319.0	348.0	239.0	301.0	322.0	265.0	250.0	260.0	198.0
	HSE Dublin & North East	459.0	454.0	502.0	476.0	497.0	451.0	417.0	424.0	467.0
	HSE Dublin & South East	253.0	294.0	292.0	136.0	333.0	396.0	344.0	350.0	274.0
	HSE Mid West	54.0	84.0	156.0	149.0	187.0	159.0	189.0	199.0	194.0
	HSE South West	179.0	207.0	255.0	328.0	317.0	202.0	167.0	209.0	198.0
	HSE West & North West	130.0	129.0	133.0	124.0	114.0	138.0	115.0	136.0	86.0
	<b>National Total</b>	<b>1,394.0</b>	<b>1,516.0</b>	<b>1,577.0</b>	<b>1,514.0</b>	<b>1,770.0</b>	<b>1,611.0</b>	<b>1,482.0</b>	<b>1,578.0</b>	<b>1,417.0</b>
Wait time to be seen initial assessment - > 3 months < 6 months	HSE Dublin & Midlands	353.0	309.0	229.0	153.0	183.0	157.0	179.0	174.0	182.0
	HSE Dublin & North East	426.0	542.0	450.0	492.0	390.0	396.0	355.0	397.0	332.0
	HSE Dublin & South East	264.0	297.0	326.0	184.0	425.0	504.0	508.0	485.0	448.0

	HSE Mid West	23.0	83.0	87.0	151.0		131.0	155.0	176.0	201.0		214.0
	HSE South West	57.0	122.0	132.0	256.0		209.0	237.0	190.0	134.0		97.0
	HSE West & North West	109.0	129.0	100.0	136.0		88.0	90.0	103.0	113.0		91.0
	<b>National Total</b>	<b>1,232.0</b>	<b>1,482.0</b>	<b>1,324.0</b>	<b>1,372.0</b>		<b>1,426.0</b>	<b>1,539.0</b>	<b>1,511.0</b>	<b>1,504.0</b>		<b>1,364.0</b>
Wait time to be seen initial assessment - > 6 months	HSE Dublin & Midlands	113.0	154.0	93.0	52.0		90.0	124.0	112.0	86.0		87.0
	HSE Dublin & North East	133.0	86.0	114.0	161.0		179.0	117.0	94.0	104.0		128.0
	HSE Dublin & South East	132.0	91.0	72.0	0.0		155.0	144.0	247.0	348.0		373.0
	HSE Mid West	29.0	30.0	55.0	50.0		91.0	105.0	146.0	143.0		172.0
	HSE South West	11.0	26.0	13.0	36.0		48.0	37.0	55.0	19.0		23.0
	HSE West & North West	85.0	88.0	102.0	123.0		53.0	49.0	49.0	70.0		78.0
	<b>National Total</b>	<b>503.0</b>	<b>475.0</b>	<b>449.0</b>	<b>422.0</b>		<b>616.0</b>	<b>576.0</b>	<b>703.0</b>	<b>770.0</b>		<b>861.0</b>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

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**Tony Mc Cusker**  
**General Manager**  
**National Mental Health Services**