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Oifig an Stiúrthóir Náisiúnta Cúnta
Rochtain agus Comhtháthú: Seirbhísí
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Deputy Martin Daly
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

19th August 2025

PQ Number: 42689/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons in each local health office area waiting for a counselling appointment in primary care as of 1 July 2025 or the latest date available; and the number waiting 0 to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 weeks and the number waiting more than 52 weeks. -Martin Daly

Dear Deputy Daly

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 19,480 referrals per year.

Current Waiting Times for HSE NCS Counselling in Primary Care

Table 1 below indicates the latest available information for the number of people waiting for the CIPC service as at 30.6.2025. Figures are provided by Health Region, LHO, and length of time waiting.



Table 1: Waiting times for Counselling with CIPC at 30.06.2025

HSERegion - CIPC Service @ 30.6.25	LHO Area	Less than 1 Mth	>1<3 Mths	3-6 Mths	6 Mths +	Total
	Dublin South City	20	14	0	0	34
	Dublin South West	22	26	0	0	48
	Dublin West	31	45	13	0	89
	Kildare West Wicklow	36	18	0	0	54
	Laois Offaly	47	129	61	29	266
	Longford Westmeath	29	95	88	43	255
HSE Dublin & Midlands	Total	185	327	162	72	746
	Cavan Monaghan	11	26	24	14	75
	Dublin North	55	99	59	0	213
	Dublin North Central	34	77	129	19	259
	Dublin North West	22	65	97	4	188
	Louth	24	62	42	2	130
	Meath	22	62	118	74	276
HSE Dublin & North East	Total	168	391	469	113	1141
	Carlow Kilkenny	7	45	82	22	156
	Dublin South East	17	33	50	70	170
	Dun Laoghaire	19	40	72	151	282
	South Tipperary	7	33	24	19	83
	Waterford	21	60	80	10	171
	Wexford	10	41	54	19	124
	Wicklow	17	32	76	103	228
HSE Dublin & South East	Total	98	284	438	394	1214
	Clare	4	36	75	83	198
	Limerick	19	104	116	38	277
	North Tipperary East Limerick	8	28	39	77	152
HSE Mid West	Total	31	168	230	198	627
	Kerry	21	41	20	5	87
	North Cork	11	18	13	2	44
	North Lee	30	70	58	14	172
	South Lee	26	68	45	15	154
	West Cork	7	14	9	2	32
HSE South West	Total	95	211	145	38	489
	Donegal	35	63	54	22	174
	Galway	46	73	33	98	250
	Mayo	18	20	2	14	54
	Roscommon	8	8	3	8	27
	Sligo Leitrim	31	35	53	64	183
HSE West & North West	Total	138	199	145	206	688
National Total		715	1580	1589	1021	4905

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.

Of the total number of people waiting at the end of June 2025, 47% were waiting 3 months or less for counselling, 21% were waiting longer than 6 months.

The number of clients currently waiting is in the context of a year on year increase in referrals to, and demand for counselling with the NCS - up to the end of June 2025 CIPC had received 10, 187 referrals. This is combined with a significant number of vacant Counsellor/Therapist posts which is negatively impacting waiting times for counselling.



I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

Tony McCusker
General Manager
Access and Integration; HSE Mental Health Services