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Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

11/06/2025

**PQ ref: 29255/25**

**To ask the Minister for Health the number of staff (full-time equivalent) employed by the HSE My Options service, broken down by year and by category, as qualified nurses, qualified counsellors, and other staff; to outline the training they are currently required to take before advising callers; and if she will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Ó Fearghaíl,

Thank you for your question, which was forwarded to my office to respond to you directly.

The number of staff employed on the My Options phone line based on the current Service Level Agreement is outlined below.

Year	Nursing staff	Counsellors	Other
2024	5.5	6.8	0.8
2025	5.5	6.8	0.8

The **My Options counsellors** provide information, listening support and counselling, as required, for those who contact the My Options phone line seeking support and information regarding an unplanned pregnancy or post abortion support. All staff working on the My Options phone line are professionally qualified and accredited counsellors with more than 3 years post qualification counselling experience. All have a relevant counselling or psychotherapy qualification, and they are accredited with a recognised, professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in Ireland.

My Options counsellors have received training in the Model of Care for Termination of Pregnancy (TOP) and understanding of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 as part of their induction and training for their role as Telephone Counsellor. Additional organisational-wide training attended by the My Options team has recently included Intercultural Diversity training, Domestic Violence Awareness training, LGBTQI training and Disability Awareness training. The team have accessed training

options via the HSELand website and have completed an online training module in Perinatal Mental Health. In-house training on unplanned pregnancy counselling and post abortion counselling is provided by an experienced unplanned pregnancy and post abortion counsellor. Group clinical supervision is provided monthly which provides a facilitated, reflective space for the team to be supported in their work; to develop their practice, skills and knowledge of working with those presenting with an unplanned pregnancy and post abortion counselling.

Counsellors also bring their professional experience from their previous roles, including addiction, sexual and reproductive health, domestic violence, and rape crisis and suicide prevention.

Continuous professional development has been provided by external professionals in the areas of foetal anomaly, domestic violence, sex trafficking awareness and telephone counselling. As practitioners, all My Options telephone counsellors attend their own private clinical supervision in line with the Code of Ethics of their accrediting body.

The **nursing team** provide My Options callers with clinical assessment and advice. All members of the nursing team are registered on the General Register of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) and hold many additional nursing qualifications across a variety of different areas of nursing.

The nursing team are highly experienced telephone triage nurses and experts in remote patient assessment. All nurses possess expert clinical knowledge and experience in triaging and supporting patients following termination of pregnancy and are proficient in identifying life threatening emergencies, potentially serious symptoms, offer evidence-based advice and determine the appropriate level of care in collaboration with the patient.

Continuous professional development and training specific to this area forms an important role for the nursing management and nursing team.

In addition to the above the nurses receive bespoke training including the model of care in Ireland for TOP, the management of patients and signposting to the appropriate healthcare service e.g., General Practitioner, Acute Hospital, Counsellor.

The triage nurses are supported by a highly experienced nursing management team, and this ensures that service users continuously receive high quality nursing care. The nursing team also work in close collaboration with the counselling team.

Yours Sincerely,

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**Helen Deely**

Assistant National Director, HSE Health and Wellbeing