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Oifig an Stiúrthóir Náisiúnta Cúnta
Rochtain agus Comhtháthú: Seirbhísí
Meabhairshláinte FSS

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Deputy Albert Dolan.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

30th June 2025

PQ Number: 32185/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health for an update on current waiting times for access to mental health support services, particularly in primary care and community settings; the measures being taken to reduce delays in access to counselling, CAMHS and adult mental health services; and the additional resources that will be allocated in 2025 to improve mental health provision nationally, and in underserved areas such as Galway. –Albert Dolan

Dear Deputy Dolan,

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.

I will endeavour to respond to each aspect of the queries raised by the Deputy in his question.

Waiting times for access to Mental Health Support Services

Child and Adolescent Services Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

HSE CAMHS provide specialist mental health service to those aged up to 18 years, who have reached the threshold for a diagnosis of moderate to severe mental health disorder that require the input of a multi-disciplinary mental health teams.

The CAMHS Operational Guideline (2019) outlines the referral and access criteria for CAMHS. When deciding if a child or adolescent needs to attend CAMHS, a number of factors are considered by the CAMHS team. These include consideration of the child or adolescent's clinical presentation, their level of social and family support and the availability of resources and treatment options at primary care level or within community networks. When a referral is received it is screened by a member of the CAMHS team in consultation with the Consultant Psychiatrist. All new referrals are discussed on a weekly team meeting.

When a referral has been screened, it is categorised into:

- Emergency
- Urgent
- Routine
- Not appropriate for CAMHS



Community CAMHS teams provide a timely response to all referrals received, dependent on their categorisation. For Emergency Referrals CAMHS Community Teams can be contacted during office hours to discuss emergency referrals in consultation with the Consultant Psychiatrist who can provide advice and consultation when the emergency or crisis is due to a diagnosed or suspected mental disorder. Outside of these hours, or in an emergency situation where no Community CAMHS Team is available, it is advised that the emergency services are contacted or that the child/ young person is brought to the Emergency Department of the nearest hospital to access a mental health assessment.

An urgent referral is one where there is a clear and present level of acute symptoms of mental disorder and where there is a strong likelihood of considerable deterioration in mental state if left untreated. Urgent referrals are usually responded to within three working days of receipt of referral and seen as soon as possible based on clinical risk.

A routine referral is one where there are clear and present levels of acute symptoms of moderate to severe mental disorder which have been ongoing but can be managed in the short-term by the child or adolescent's support network. Routine referrals should be seen within 12 weeks or sooner depending on service demands.

The table below provides the latest available information on the number of children and young people waiting to be seen by CAMHS as at end of **May 2025**. Please be advised that this data is preliminary and subject to change and amendment pending ongoing review and validation. Age range is not captured.

CAMHS Waiting List data as at end May 2025

	Total No. waiting to be seen	<= 12 wks. No.	> 12 <= 26 wks. No.	>26 <=39 wks. No.	>39 <=52 wks. No.	>52 wks. No.
National Total	4,437	1,629	979	666	450	713
HSE Dublin & Midlands	780	347	180	87	70	96
HSE Dublin & North East	1,050	266	247	197	124	216
HSE Dublin & South East	666	378	174	74	33	7
HSE Mid-West	186	75	38	34	28	11
HSE South West	1,063	230	175	159	129	370
HSE West & North West	692	333	165	115	66	13

**May data return rate 98.8% - 1 team non-return of data - HSE Dublin & Midlands (Longford/North Westmeath)*

General Adult Mental Health Services

Adult Mental Health Services aims to offer an appointment to 90% of new or re-referred cases within 12 weeks with the remaining cases offered an appointment shortly afterwards. At the end of May Nationally 85.7% of new or re-referred cases were offered an appointment within 12 weeks. Please see table below which provides breakdown by Regional Health Area.



Overall National	85.7%
HSE Dublin & Midlands	83.3%
HSE Dublin & North East	73.7%
HSE Dublin & South East	88.7%
HSE Mid-West	93.4%
HSE South West	88.2%
HSE West & North West	93.6%

Psychiatry of Later Life (POLL)

Psychiatry of Later Life Services aims to offer an appointment to 98% of new or re-referred cases within 12 weeks with the remaining cases offered an appointment shortly afterwards. At the end of May Nationally 90% of new or re-referred cases were offered an appointment within 12 weeks.

National	90.0%
HSE Dublin & Midlands	72.5%
HSE Dublin & North East	84.6%
HSE Dublin & South East	97.4%
HSE Mid-West	97.7%
HSE South West	80.1%
HSE West & North West	95.8%

In the HSE Community Mental Health Services every effort is made to prioritise referrals so that people with high risk presentations are responded to quickly as possible. However, it is worth noting that sometimes appointments breaching 12 weeks may be outside the Community Mental Health Services control due to operational reasons.

The National Counselling Service

The HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) is a professional, confidential, counselling and psychotherapy service available free of charge in all regions of the country. It was established in 2000 following the Taoiseach's apology in 1999 on behalf of the State for abuse of children in residential institutions.

The CAPA service for adults who have experienced childhood abuse provides counselling and psychotherapy for moderate to severe psychological difficulties and offers medium to long term counselling contracts. Referrals can be made by the person needing counselling themselves, or by a health care professional.

In 2013, the NCS expanded nationally to provide the **Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC)** service to adults who hold a GMS card who may be experiencing mild to moderate psychological difficulties. **The CIPC model of service** is aimed at providing early access to counselling. Clients are offered up to eight counselling sessions. Referral to CIPC is a written referral from the person's GP or member of their Primary Care Team.

Counselling to former residents of Mother and Baby Home Institutions.

In 2021 the National Counselling Service began offering counselling to former residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions as part of the Government agreed package of health and



well-being measures. **There is no waiting list for this service.** The NCS continues to prioritise these clients with immediate allocation to counselling if this is the client's choice.

In April 2024 following the inquest into the **Stardust fire disaster** the National Counselling Service began providing counselling to family members and those impacted by the Stardust. **There is no waiting list for this service.** The NCS prioritises these clients with immediate allocation to counselling if this is the client's choice. The majority of clients accessing this service reside in the Dublin North East Health Region.

Current Waiting Times for NCS

Table 1 below indicates the latest available information for the number of people waiting for the HSE National Counselling Service (as at 28.2.2025). Figures are provided by Health Region, LHO and length of time waiting. Age category data is not available.



Region	LHO Area	Total Less than 1 Month	Total >1<3 Months	Total >3<6 Months	6 Mths +	Total
HSE Dublin & Midlands	Total	220	358	305	154	1037
HSE Dublin & Midlands	Dublin South City	16	16	17	5	
HSE Dublin & Midlands	Dublin South West	34	44	17	2	
HSE Dublin & Midlands	Dublin West	39	43	24	0	
HSE Dublin & Midlands	Kildare West Wicklow	40	26	14	0	
HSE Dublin & Midlands	Laois Offaly	53	109	99	34	
HSE Dublin & Midlands	Longford Westmeath	38	120	134	113	
HSE Dublin & North East	Total	181	406	508	335	1430
HSE Dublin & North East	Cavan Monaghan	9	29	51	17	
HSE Dublin & North East	Dublin North	54	109	83	60	
HSE Dublin & North East	Dublin North Central	37	85	125	67	
HSE Dublin & North East	Dublin North West	33	68	69	41	
HSE Dublin & North East	Louth	22	55	66	29	
HSE Dublin & North East	Meath	26	60	114	121	
HSE Dublin & South East	Total	104	296	583	452	1435
HSE Dublin & South East	Carlow Kilkenny	8	40	9	76	
HSE Dublin & South East	Dublin South East	22	37	77	48	
HSE Dublin & South East	Dun Laoghaire	22	53	87	115	
HSE Dublin & South East	South Tipperary	6	21	59	24	
HSE Dublin & South East	Waterford	6	56	89	79	
HSE Dublin & South East	Wexford	9	46	68	40	
HSE Dublin & South East	Wicklow	27	45	131	70	
HSE Mid West	Total	60	170	259	149	638
HSE Mid West	Clare	14	42	66	47	
HSE Mid West	Limerick	34	84	119	31	
HSE Mid West	North Tipperary East Limerick	13	44	74	71	
HSE South West	Total	113	173	175	96	557
HSE South West	Kerry	30	34	38	4	
HSE South West	North Cork	11	16	16	6	
HSE South West	North Lee	23	50	62	36	
HSE South West	South Lee	41	61	49	44	
HSE South West	West Cork	8	12	10	6	
HSE West & North West	Total	72	129	191	320	712
HSE West & North West	Donegal	43	56	46	14	
HSE West & North West	Galway	8	18	44	208	
HSE West & North West	Mayo	3	2	16	29	
HSE West & North West	Roscommon	3	9	15	15	
HSE West & North West	Sligo Leitrim	15	44	71	57	
National Total		751	1534	2021	1509	5815

Waiting times for the NCS/CiPC vary across HSE Health Regions depending on a number of factors including level of demand, staffing levels, service delivery model and individual geographic factors. 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 February 2025 -5,815- 39% were waiting 3 months or less for counselling. 26% of people were waiting longer than 6 months.



Measures being taken to reduce delays in access to Mental Health Services

A key priority for the HSE is addressing long patient wait times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care. As part of a multi-annual approach to managing waiting lists, Waiting List Action Plans (WLAP) have been developed by the Department of Health and the HSE setting out ambitious targets to improve waiting lists and waiting times by delivering additional activity across acute hospitals and community settings.

A key component of the WLAP for 2025 is the development of Regional Plans, which are essential to tailor national strategies to local need. The development of Regional Plans are crucial for integrating community-based services, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to ensure seamless transitions of care and to reduce waiting lists with a focus on reducing the longest waits, while recognising clinical autonomy on managing clinical risk.

Regional Plans are crucial to ensure that the right care is delivered in the right place at the right time in line with the objectives of *Sláintecare*. Regional plans provide enable:

- **Local Adaptation** by allowing a detailed assessment of service performance, consideration of local factors with a clear understanding of local challenges.
- **Integrated Care:** The reconfiguration of the Health Service Executive (HSE) into six health regions facilitates the delivery of integrated health and social care, designed around people and their communities.
- **Flexibility:** To develop and deliver a range of initiatives that meet local and regional need.
- **Accountability:** Will help to ensure accountability for the implementation of the plan at local level.

The WLAP for 2025 acknowledges the need to address CAMHS waiting lists in Galway and indeed across the country. Currently plans are under discussion with the 6 Regional Health Authorities, indicating a collaborative approach to improving access to CAMHS. The allocation for CAMHS W/L initiative in 2025 is €3 million. Budget allocation across the 6 Regions to be will be based on the <18 population per region.

The NCS/ CIPC received additional funding in 2022 and 2023 as part of the HSE Waiting List Action Plans to deliver reductions in waiting lists numbers and waiting times. As a result of this additional funding 4,295 additional clients were removed from NCS Waiting lists improving client access to CIPC services.

Funding

The total 2025 funding for Mental Health services as per the published National Service Plan for 2025 amounts to €1,458m. Mental Health child and adolescent services funding is estimated at €180.7m or 12.4% of the overall Mental Health budget.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.



Yours Sincerely,

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