



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar,
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Deputy Sorcha Clarke.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

10th July 2025

PQ Number: 33173/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if she is aware that many general practitioners appear to lack awareness or confidence regarding their role in providing or referring adolescents to primary care mental health services; and the steps her Department is taking to improve this awareness among healthcare providers and families

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.

It is generally accepted that most mental health needs can successfully be met in primary care settings. *Sharing the Vision, Ireland's mental health policy (2020)* recognises the pivotal role played by general practitioners (GPs), both as the continuing point of contact for people who are experiencing mental health difficulties and as a referrer to mental health services in primary care settings or to specialist mental health services for those with more complex needs. It is therefore important that GPs, alongside other clinicians working in primary care settings, are confident and appropriately supported in this role. Among other things, this requires a continuing focus on specialist training, lifelong learning and education, access to information and guidance, and development of consultation / liaison models between primary care and specialist mental health services.

The Irish College of General Practitioners trains and supports GPs in Ireland throughout their career, including through the Professional Competence Scheme, courses and educational programmes, also covering mental health. As an example, a new module on youth mental health is expected to be launched by September 2025.

In line with recommendation 100 in *Sharing the Vision*, significant progress has been made towards aligning training for GPs and psychiatrists to reflect the importance of integrated care. In collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners, the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland and people with lived experience, a joint review of training programmes has taken place. This work will continue over the course of the *2025 – 2027 Sharing the Vision Implementation Plan* and will also involve the further rollout of Balint groups across GP training schemes, fostering a culture of support and reflective practice among trainees. A Balint group is a purposeful, regular meeting among clinicians, facilitated by trained leaders, who discuss the clinician / service user relationship and provide peer support.



Meanwhile, work is underway to develop guidance, which will support a consistent approach to consultation / liaison models between primary care and specialist mental health services, whereby GPs can access consultative support and advice to support them in their role. Informed by the current evidence base and guided by lived experience, this will further strengthen a shared care approach to service delivery and continuity of mental health care.

These initiatives will complement existing resources available to GPs and other primary care clinicians, including the *Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Operational Guideline (2019)*, which sets out best practice for the interface between CAMHS and referrers. As part of the *Child and Youth Mental Health Office Action Plan 2024 – 2027*, the guideline is now being reviewed and up-dated in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

Significant work has also been undertaken to provide easy access to information on mental health supports for referrers through online platforms and service directories. Last year, a directory of mental health and suicide prevention supports was compiled and published online. This practical resource was co-produced to assist GPs and practice nurses to easily and effectively connect people with mental health supports and services in their area.

The HSE remains committed to developing mental health services in primary care and ensuring GPs are appropriately supported in their role as service provider, referrer and continuing point of contact for adolescents who are experiencing mental health difficulties.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

General Manager – Policy Implementation
HSE Mental Health Services
Access and Integration