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

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Deputy Martin Daly.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

30th June 2025

PQ Number: 34549/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons in each LHO area waiting for a counselling appointment in primary care as of 1 June 2025, or the latest date available; and the number waiting 0 to 12 weeks, 12 to 26, 26 to 52, and 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 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.

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. The NCS has experienced a 15% increase in referrals since 2022. This is combined with a significant number of vacant Counsellor/Therapist posts which is negatively impacting waiting times in the NCS at present.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

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