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Oifig an Stiúrthóir Náisiúnta Cúnta
Rochtain agus Comhtháthú: Seirbhísí
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Deputy Rose Conway-Walsh.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

11th March 2025

PQ Number: 10214/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if she will provide an update on supports for people with eating disorders; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Rose Conway-Walsh

Dear Deputy Conway-Walsh,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in response to the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Most people can and do recover from eating disorders if they receive effective, evidence-based treatment from eating disorder (ED)-trained staff. While a small number of people benefit from more intensive treatment through day programmes or inpatient care, the most effective treatment setting is in the community. The HSE's core focus is on developing regional community-based specialist ED services provided by skilled multidisciplinary teams.

Rollout of the National Clinical Programme for Eating Disorders

In January 2018, the HSE published a National Model of Care for Eating Disorders (MOC) in partnership with College of Psychiatrists' of Ireland and Bodywhys. The roll-out of the MOC for the National Clinical Programme for Eating Disorders (NCP-ED) continues to be prioritised by the HSE. Dedicated investment in eating disorders continues, and the HSE spends over €8 million annually on eating disorder services under the Clinical Programme. There are over 100 posts funded under the NCP-ED, with over 80 eating disorder clinicians, including 10 consultant psychiatrists, treating people with eating disorders.

The NCP-ED is being implemented across the country by multidisciplinary teams on a phased basis. Currently, there are 11 teams in place: six adult teams and five Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) teams. Six new teams started in 2023, and a new team to cover Kildare/West Wicklow, Dublin West, Dublin South City and Dublin South-West is currently in recruitment. This will bring the total number of eating disorder teams nationally to 12.

Funding under Budget 2025 will allow for an additional two adult eating disorder teams. This will bring the total number of eating disorder teams nationally to 14 out of the 16 teams envisaged under the Model of Care.



By the end of 2025, each of the 6 new HSE Health Regions will have at least one eating disorders team, some regions will have 2 teams in place and HSE Dublin and South East will have 3 teams operating.

Inpatient Services

Children and Young People

Children and young people with an eating disorder diagnosis who require inpatient treatment can be referred to one of four regional CAMHS inpatient approved centres. These are: Linn Dara Approved Centre, Dublin, St Josephs Approved Centre in Dublin, Eist Linn Approved Centre in Cork and Merlin Park Approved Centre in Galway. All four CAMHS units manage and treat ED cases that are admitted when treatment in the community is not indicated. Two of the four units can provide additional care up to and including nasogastric feeding (NG). The other two units are actively training nursing staff and recruiting dietician staff that will enable them to also administer NG feeding treatment plans within their respective units as well.

As part of the new CHI hospital development, there will be additional beds as part of a new 20 bedded CAMHS inpatient approved centre which will be colocated within the new children's hospital.

Adults

Currently there are three specialist ED beds based at St Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin for adults with eating disorders who are in need of inpatient admission. In other parts of the country, adults who have an eating disorder diagnosis and require inpatient care can be referred to any of the HSE's acute inpatient mental health-approved centre's around the country. Referrals are reviewed individually to determine the likely clinical benefits of admission as well as possible other treatment alternatives. It is also important to note that people with eating disorders who are medically unstable and require medical admission for acute medical stabilisation, and those who require intensive initial refeeding, including nasogastric feeding, are admitted to HSE acute and general hospitals.

Additional Eating Disorder and Family Supports

Established CAMHS and Adult ED teams have active wait list support initiatives through the provision of psychoeducation resources, signposting to Bodywhys and liaising with primary care.

Family Supports: Each team offers family supports and education, some teams have dedicated group programmes in place. First line evidence based intervention for children is Family Based Therapy (FBT). This is provided by all ED CAMHS Teams. All families are provided with information and resources and are signposted to use HSE Self Care App. All families are signed posted to completed PiLAR online family education programme with Bodywhys.

Body whys: The HSE provides funding annually to Body whys, the national advocacy agency for people with eating disorders and their families. Body whys provide a range of services (support groups, online groups, email and family programmes) for adults and young people with eating disorders, and their families.

The HSE also supports Body whys to run the Pillar (Peer Led Resilience) Programme, a 4-week online modular based programme for parents, friends and carers of a person with an eating disorder to build resilience and gain support in their role as a supporter/friend. In 2022, 926 families attended the programme.

The NCPED is working with Bodywhys to establish a national reference group of carer and service users.



Guidance from the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) and Bodywhys for GPs on the Assessment and Management of eating disorders in Primary Care is available here: <https://www.bodywhys.ie/for-professionals/resource-for-gps/>

HSE Eating Disorder Self Care App

In March 2019, the HSE launched the first [Self Care App](#) which provides valuable information for those:

- with an eating disorder caring for someone with an eating disorder
- worried about developing an eating disorder
- diagnosed or are recovering from an eating disorder

Further information on the HSE National Clinical Programme for Eating Disorders can be found here: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/mental-health/eating-disorders/>

Further information about the Self Help App is available here: [HSE Eating Disorder Self Help App](#)

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Mc Cusker
General Manager
Access and Integration: HSE Mental Health Services