



Oifig an Chomhairleora Chliniciúil
Náisiúnta agus Ceannaire Grúpa do
Mheabhairshláinte

HSE, Ospidéal an Dr Stevens, Baile Átha
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Deputy O'Donoghue,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Date: 15th April 2025

PQ Number: 10581/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health to prioritise reducing waiting lists for eating disorder treatment in order that vital early intervention can happen without delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter Richard O'Donoghue

Dear Deputy O'Donoghue,

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 HSE has prioritised eating disorder services as part of National Clinical Programmes (NCPs) and has established a specific clinical programme for eating disorders. The NCPs aim to develop person-centred, integrated care through a clinician-led, evidence-based approach to service reform. The need for specialist services is reflected in Sharing the Vision and more recently in the new Programme for Government. 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 HSE core focus is on developing regional community-based specialist eating disorder services across CAMHS and adult populations, provided by skilled multidisciplinary teams, through the National Clinical Programme for Eating Disorders. There are currently five CAMHS teams and six adult teams at various stages of development across the HSE. These consultant-led teams provide specialist eating disorder assessment and treatment in the community and are the foundations of quality eating disorder care.

Over 90 eating disorder clinicians have been recruited since the establishment of the NCP for eating disorders including 11 Consultant Psychiatrists. This is in contrast to pre-2018 when there were less than 5 HSE clinicians in dedicated eating disorder posts. During 2025 an

additional 3 ED teams will become operational with an additional 3 Consultant posts. Every year more children, adolescents and adults are accessing assessments and treatment with HSE regional community-based specialist eating disorder teams.

Early intervention, evidence-based care, and consistent specialist support make a profound difference to the clinical and personal recovery of people who are affected by eating disorders, including to those in adolescence when so many eating disorders begin. The most effective treatment setting for eating disorders is usually in the community, and a small number of people benefit from more intensive treatment through day programmes or inpatient care.

Since 2019, the number of referrals to community specialist eating disorders teams has grown year-on-year, peaking during COVID-19 in 2021. In 2022, there was a slight decrease in the number of referrals. However, an upward trend was again reported in the latter part of 2023 and continued throughout 2024. This increase is in part due to increased availability of services with the number of teams delivering services augmented, and access to suitable treatment rooms coming on stream for some teams.

Direct referrals from GPs for eating disorders to the teams are the second highest referral source and as teams are getting referrals early this will impact positively on patient outcomes. During 2024 80% of all accepted referrals were seen within 8 weeks and 90% of those starting treatment did so within 4 weeks of assessment.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Amir Niazi
National Clinical Advisor & Group Lead for Mental Health
Clinical Design and Innovation
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