

27th March 2025

Padraig Rice, TD
Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

PQ: 10757/25

To ask the Minister for Health if her attention has been drawn to a research report into the prevalence of neurodiversity among people accessing addiction services (details supplied); the steps she is taking to ensure that there is an appropriate service response; if she will commit to providing neurodiversity training to drug services' staff at all levels; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Rice,

I have been asked to comment on your Parliamentary Question above from the perspective of the HSE Addiction Services.

The service is aware of the research report referred to and this adds to the merging knowledge around this particular issue. There has been increasing recognition of neurodevelopmental disorders in the community generally in recent years, with estimates of between 3- 5 % of working age adults having ADHD.

In populations of patients attending services for treatment of substance use disorders, it is now clear that significantly more patients have comorbid ADHD diagnoses as the report highlights.

Effective treatment of ADHD usually improves both ADHD symptom profile and burden, and assists in improving substance use outcomes.

It is recognised that there is a need to increase awareness and knowledge of neurodevelopmental disorders and neurodiversity for staff working in HSE Addiction Services and this is ongoing.

There is a Clinical Programme for ADHD that has been operational in the HSE under the Mental Health Directorate. We have had discussions with the Clinical Programme in relation to this issue. The programme is not specifically aimed at those people with Substance Use Disorders who display more complexities in diagnosis and treatment and would require additional inputs.

Training in relation to the assessment, diagnosis and pharmacological treatment of ADHD is not readily available in Ireland and requires sourcing in the UK and this is expensive. There is no specific training

budget available for HSE Addiction Services to avail of this training and even the Clinical Programme is experiencing challenges in accessing training funds.

There is a new National Drug Strategy under preparation to be released in 2025. Through this mechanism, perhaps the whole issue of training could be prioritised and then resourced so that business cases in relation to this could be generated in the HSE Estimates process.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Eamon Keenan
National Clinical Lead-Addiction Services
HSE National Social Inclusion Office