



Office of the Assistant National Director
Access and Integration

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

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Deputy Cian O'Callaghan.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

03rd April 2025

PQ Number: 14245/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health to consider implementing a system whereby patients who present with emergency mental health crisis do not have to go through the regular A&E; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Cian O'Callaghan

Dear Cian O'Callaghan,

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.

Hospital Emergency Departments' prioritise and treat the most unwell patients and those with life-threatening illnesses first. Some patients who present to an ED may be known by Community Mental Health Services already and there may be enhanced co-ordination and care planning between ED staff and both inpatient and outpatient mental health services as required. For patients with both physical and mental health needs, the National Clinical Programme for Self-Harm and Suicide Related Ideation (NCPSHI) and Emergency Medicines Programme (EMP) promote the use of parallel assessments, whereby a mental health professional can work alongside ED staff or medical staff in meeting patients' needs. Support is also provided in general hospital settings through liaison mental health services.

All patients who present to an Emergency Department (ED) when in crisis, following self-harm or with suicidal ideation follow the emergency care pathway which includes the following steps:

- Patient triage (nurse assessment using standardised tools that determines the clinical priority of the patient according to the severity of their presentation)
- Emergency Medicine Clinician assessment (emergency medicine doctor or nurse practitioner)
- Investigations (tests)
- Treatment
- Referral to appropriate specialty e.g. liaison mental health services for further specialty assessment
- Decision to admit or discharge the patient with appropriate follow up (hospital or community mental health services).



Liaison Mental Health Services (LMHS) and National Clinical Programme for Self Harm and Suicide Related Ideation (NCPSHI)

LMHS provide a specialist service for individuals' attending ED's in a crisis and are available to all age groups. LMHS also provide support to patients who are inpatients in acute hospitals, as well as their treating clinicians. LMHS manage ED presentations which occur in areas overlapping mental and physical healthcare. Internationally, this specialty is known variously as liaison psychiatry, psychological medicine, and general hospital psychiatry.

Patients are referred to the NCPSHI following medical triage and assessment within the ED. The NCPSHI and Emergency Medicines Programme promote the use of parallel assessments, whereby a mental health professional can work alongside ED staff or medical staff in meeting patients' needs. A comprehensive biopsychosocial assessment is completed by Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS's), other equally qualified mental health professionals and Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHD's), all of whom receive clinical guidance and supervision from Consultant Psychiatrists. An emergency safety plan is developed in collaboration with the patient and supportive adult. The patient is bridged to their next appropriate care appointment and a follow up telephone contact is made to the patient within 24 hours.

The NCP Self Harm and Suicide Related Ideation was first introduced in 2014 and is now implemented in 26 ED's with 24 hour service including CHI Tallaght, with planning under way to ensure full national coverage. In February 2022 Minister Butler launched a revised Model of Care (MOC). The MOC outlines in detail the response for people who present to the ED including services for children and adolescents with self-harm and suicide related ideation. To date this programme has funded 48.5 Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) posts.

The NCP aims to ensure that all patients who present to the ED following self-harm or with suicidal ideation will receive a prompt biopsychosocial assessment, their next of kin will receive support and advice on suicide prevention, the patient will be linked with the next appropriate care, and both the patient and their general practitioner will receive a written plan of care.

Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurses (SCAN)

While continuing to maintain and further improve the NCP within the acute hospital ED's, the updated NCPSH MOC now extends into the community where GP's play a central role in the recognition of suicide related behaviours and in interventions with patients. An important feature in the updated MOC is the incorporation of the existing Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurse (SCAN) service within the NCPSHI. Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurses (SCAN) provide assessment and support to GP patients who present with suicide-related thoughts, who might otherwise be referred to the emergency department or community mental health services. The SCAN service is being rolled out nationally as part of the model of care for the NCP (2022).

There are 22 funded CNS posts providing a SCAN service across the HSE. The breakdown is as follows:

- 7 in HSE Dublin and North East
- 2 in HSE Dublin and Midlands
- 5 in HSE Dublin and South East
- 4 in HSE South West
- 4 in HSE West and North West



The SCAN service conforms to the key recommendations of A Vision for Change (2006), and more recently [Sharing the Vision](#) (2020) and [Connecting for Life](#), Ireland's national strategy to reduce suicide.

This year, funding has been secured for an additional 6 SCAN nursing posts to expand SCAN services to CAMHS, adults and to members of travelling community.

Further information on this programme can be found here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/self-harm-suicide-related-ideation/>

Additional Information and supports for those experiencing a Mental Health Crisis

Crisis Resolution Services

The Model of Care for Crisis Resolution Services (CRS) was launched in May 2023 and has two key service components, which are interconnected: Crisis Resolution Teams and Crisis Cafés (branded nationally as Solace Cafés). The pilot implementation of the Crisis Resolution Services Model of Care is currently underway across five learning sites and an independent evaluation of these sites is in process, which when completed will inform and support the future scaling up of these services nationally.

Crisis Resolution Teams (CRT's) are community based multidisciplinary teams that provide rapid assessment and intensive support to people who are in a mental health crisis. The team can provide an alternative to inpatient admission in the service user's own environment and/or in a community setting, with the active involvement of service users and their family, carers and supporters, and interagency liaison with local partners. Currently, there are five CRT's in operation:

- Sligo / Leitrim
- Cork North Lee
- Cork South Lee
- Waterford
- South Dublin / Wicklow

Solace Cafés provide an out-of-hours friendly and supportive community crisis prevention and crisis response service in the evenings and at weekends in a café style/non-clinical safe environment. The Solace Café service supports individuals and their family members/carers to deal with an immediate crisis and to plan safely drawing on their strengths, resilience and coping mechanisms to manage their mental health and well-being. Attendees can access coping strategies, one to one peer support, psychosocial and recovery supports. Those who attend will be signposted to relevant mental health and well-being services and community supports as required. Solace Cafes accept self-referrals and referrals from healthcare practitioners, NGO's and community partner agencies.

There are currently three Solace Cafes open with plans to open a further two in 2025:

- **Sligo Solace café** - <https://www.sligosocialservices.ie/solace-cafe> open Thursday to Sunday 5pm to 10.30pm
- **Cork City Solace Café** – open Thursdays - Sundays 5.30pm to 11:00pm
<https://corkmentalhealth.com/solace-cafe/>
- **Dublin/Wicklow Solace Café** – open Thursday to Sunday 5pm to 10:00pm
<https://www.aware.ie/solace-cafe/>



- **Waterford Solace Café** – plans to commence the service are progressing
- **Limerick City Solace Café** – due to open in early 2025

I trust this is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

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