



Deputy Michael Collins.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

06th June 2025

PQ Number: 26900/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the community-based mental health supports available to children waiting over 12 months for CAMHS appointments; and if these are standardised across the State. -Michael Collins

Dear Deputy Collins,

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.

HSE Child and Adolescent Services (CAMHS) provide specialist mental health service to those aged up to 18 years, who have reached the threshold for a diagnosis of moderate to severe mental health disorder that require the input of a multi-disciplinary mental health teams.

The CAMHS Operational Guideline (2019) outlines the referral and access criteria for CAMHS. When deciding if a child or adolescent needs to attend CAMHS, a number of factors are considered by the CAMHS team. These include consideration of the child or adolescent's clinical presentation, their level of social and family support and the availability of resources and treatment options at primary care level or within community networks. When a referral is received it is screened by a member of the CAMHS team in consultation with the Consultant Psychiatrist. All new referrals are discussed on a weekly team meeting.

When a referral has been screened, it is categorised into:

- Emergency
- Urgent
- Routine
- Not appropriate for CAMHS

Community CAMHS teams provide a timely response to all referrals received, dependent on their categorisation. For Emergency Referrals CAMHS Community Teams can be contacted during office hours to discuss emergency referrals in consultation with the Consultant Psychiatrist who can provide advice and consultation when the emergency or crisis is due to a diagnosed or suspected mental disorder. Outside of these hours, or in an emergency situation where no Community CAMHS Team is available, it is advised that the emergency services are contacted or that the child/ young



person is brought to the Emergency Department of the nearest hospital to access a mental health assessment.

An urgent referral is one where there is a clear and present level of acute symptoms of mental disorder and where there is a strong likelihood of considerable deterioration in mental state if left untreated. Urgent referrals are usually responded to within three working days of receipt of referral and seen as soon as possible based on clinical risk.

A routine referral is one where there are clear and present levels of acute symptoms of moderate to severe mental disorder which have been ongoing but can be managed in the short-term by the child or adolescent's support network. Routine referrals should be seen within 12 weeks or sooner depending on service demands.

In terms of community-based mental health supports available to children, the HSE provides and funds a wide range of services/supports for children/ young people. These include:

Your Mental Health Website

Information and advice about mental health and wellbeing including information on:

- types of mental health services and supports and how to access them
- self-help guides, tools and activities to support and improve mental health
- advice on how to support someone experiencing a mental health difficulty, issue or condition

Further information can be found here: www.yourmentalhealth.ie

HSE Primary Care Psychology Services

Primary Care Psychology services exist within community-based primary care centres located all over Ireland. They provide a broad range of services to children aged 0 to 17 years of age. Each primary care centre usually has a team of occupational therapists, psychologists, nurses and social workers. The aim of the psychology services is to support the psychological wellbeing of people in the local area. They can provide mental health interventions to young people with mild to moderate mental health concerns, and their parents. This includes individual therapy, group-based therapeutic work for children, adolescents and parents, and various types of assessments. The primary care centre may also offer childrens groups and informational talks where they help direct children to gain useful resources. Any healthcare professional can refer to the **HSE's Primary Care Psychology Services**. Parents can also use the referral form, available at any primary care health centre or they can make direct enquiries at the local primary care office.

Non-profit organisations

The HSE also funds a number of organisations to provide support services for children dealing with mental health issues. These include:

Barnardos

Barnardos Ireland is a service for young people up to the age of 18 years. They also provide individual counselling, family support and bereavement services operating around the country.

Jigsaw

The Jigsaw Support Line is available for free mental health support and advice to young people aged 12 - 25 years old, and parents or concerned adults



- Freephone 1800 544729 (from 1pm to 5pm Monday to Friday)
- Text CALL ME to 086 180 3880, giving your preferred day and time for a call (from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)
- Email help@jigsaw.ie (for responses from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)
- Visit www.jigsaw.ie or www.jigsawonline.ie for more information

Pieta

Provides free therapeutic support to people who are in suicidal distress and those who engage in self-harm.

Website: www.pieta.ie

Tel: 1800 247 247

Other Organisations

Family Resource Centres

There are 109 Family Resource Centres in communities around the country run by the **Child and Family Agency Tusla**. They deliver community-based supports to children and families in disadvantaged areas, and some services have access to a visiting psychotherapist.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

Paul Braham
Senior Operations Manager (Area DON)
Access and Integration; HSE Mental Health Services