



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

An Oifig Náisiúnta don Chuimsiú
Sóisialta
Rannóg Cúram Príomhúil
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse
Sláinte
Lána an Mhuilinn
Baile Phámar
Baile Átha Cliath 20

☎: 01-620 1747 ✉: 01-620 1626

National Social Inclusion Office
Primary Care Division
Health Service Executive
Mill Lane
Palmerstown
Dublin 20

23rd June, 2016

Deputy Jonathan O'Brien
Dáil Eireann
Kildare St.
Dublin 2

PQ 13544/16

* To ask the Minister for Health if he will conduct a rapid assessment to quickly estimate the situation and service needs of drug users who are under 18 years of age.

Dear Deputy O'Brien,

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

A minority of people under 18 years use illegal drugs occasionally, and most of this is short term or occasional cannabis use. Drug dependence, especially opiate or stimulant dependence, and injecting drug use are uncommon. Young people with psychosocial problems, young offenders, young people with mental health problems, and those excluded from school are most likely to misuse drugs and alcohol.

Drug treatment goals are initially focused on reduction of immediate harm, addressing psychosocial and interpersonal factors which perpetuate substance use and then to try to move towards abstinence. Family Therapy has been found to be more effective than other treatments in engaging and retaining adolescents in treatment and reducing their drug use.

Although the evidence base for treatment in this group is not extensive, evidence and clinical experience suggests young people's drug treatment is different from that of adults and should be provided separately (NICE,2007b). Structured treatment by specialist multidisciplinary substance misuse treatment services, in collaboration with other children's agencies is indicated for those with significant or complex substance misuse problems.

Pharmacological treatment is required for a minority of young people who are physically dependent on alcohol, benzodiazepines or opiates.

Numbers of under-18s presenting to HSE Addiction services in the Greater Dublin area has decreased in the last 5 years. As at December 2015, the HSE was fully meeting the NDS target of all under-18s referred for treatment accessing treatment within one week.

Outside the Greater Dublin area there is a need to develop services for Under 18s particularly in relation to Dual Diagnosis. There is now an opportunity to plan and develop services in this regard in terms of the new National Drugs Strategy and also with the planned establishment of a Clinical Programme addressing co-existing Substance Misuse and serious Mental Health problems.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Doyle', written in a cursive style.

Joseph Doyle
National Planning Specialist