16th October 2018

Deputy Róisín Shortall
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

PQ 39793/18
* To ask the Minister for Health the specific treatment services which are available to address the wide-scale use of cocaine, including crack cocaine; the location of these services; and the specific funding allocated in each case

Dear Deputy Shortall,

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:

Cocaine remains the third most common drug reported among people presenting to treatment in Ireland. In 2016, 12.3% of cases reported problem cocaine use, the highest proportion since 2010. Since 2014 there has been a steady increase in the proportion of new cases for treatment reporting cocaine as a main problem drug in Ireland, rising from a low of 297 cases in 2013 to 568 cases in 2016.

Through the national drugs strategy, ‘Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery’, the HSE is working to strengthen early harm reduction responses to current and emerging trends and patterns of drug use, create greater awareness and expand the geographical spread and range of treatment services.

People who present with cocaine use as poly drug use or as a main problem drug are among the range of service users accessing the addiction services. While most CHO areas do not have cocaine specific services, some targeted interventions in CHO 7 are as follows:

- Tallaght: St. Dominic’s Community Response Project run an evening cocaine project. 3 pilot projects are running from Sept-Dec 2018 in CARP Killinarden, New Hope Residential and JADD.
- Ballyfermot: Ballyfermot Star run a cocaine specific programme called Realt Solas. Ballyfermot Advance has developed their outreach programme, targeting crack cocaine use in the community.
- Clondalkin: Clondalkin Tus Nua provide outreach harm reduction services including crack pipe distribution, low threshold drop in and one to one key working and holistic
supports to crack cocaine and cocaine users. They have a structured day stabilisation programme that has seen an increase in people using crack cocaine.

CASP: provide crack pipes as part of their fixed site NSP programme. They also provide one to one counselling and key working, low threshold drop in and group work for cocaine and crack cocaine users. They are running a second residential stabilisation programme for crack cocaine users this year.

Irish Rail initiative: An interagency outreach programme in conjunction with Irish Rail / Gardai / SW RDATF. This initiative targets those most at risk and engages them in services locally or refers to services in their own areas. The SAFE campaign was launched on the 1st October regarding this initiative.

- Crumlin: Addiction Response Crumlin (ARC) provide a Cocaine and polydrug use programme.
- Dublin 12: Walkinstown Greenhill's Resource Centre psychotherapists and counsellors provide a range of cognitive therapy interventions to service users engaged in cocaine and crack cocaine use.

Harm reduction services are often the first point of contact with drug using populations. In light of the recent rise in the use of crack cocaine in some specific communities, addiction services have been dispensing sterile crack pipes and harm reduction information to service users via HSE needle exchanges and section 39 agencies. Providing crack pipes is an opportunity for addiction services to engage with people and provide evidenced based information in relation to their drug use and health. It is not possible to extrapolate costs for cocaine specific paraphernalia.

In light of an upward trend in cocaine use, a campaign was developed during the summer by the HSE in partnership with the Ana Liffey Drug Project to raise awareness about the dangers of using cocaine (powder and crack), and how to reduce the harms associated with snorting, smoking or injecting cocaine.

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

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Doyle
National Planning Specialist