



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta  
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar,  
Baile Átha Cliath 20, D20 HK69

Office of the  
Assistant National Director  
Mental Health Operations

St Lomans Hospital, Palmerstown,  
Dublin 20, D20 HK69

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)  
[@hselive](https://twitter.com/hselive)

t: 01-6207304

e: [PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie](mailto:PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie)

Deputy Colm Burke.  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

07<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**PQ Number: 49873/23**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health to outline the steps that he will take to address the growing numbers on waiting lists within the CAMHS services, considering that there was an almost 60% increase in waiting list numbers between 2020-2022; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Colm Burke**

---

Dear Deputy Burke,

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.

CAMHS provide specialist mental health services 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 multi-disciplinary mental health teams. CAMHS referral teams meet on a weekly basis to review all referrals and to assess the risk to the young person. There are two types of referral to CAMHS; an urgent referral and a routine referral. Every effort is made to prioritise urgent referrals so that young people with high risk presentations are seen as soon as possible; this is often within 24 to 48 hours. Severity of presenting symptoms affect waiting times - where waiting times for those with high risk presentations are shorter. This in turn may impact on wait times for cases that are considered, by a clinician, to be less severe.

Waiting lists vary across Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) areas. While some areas have relatively short waiting lists, regrettably waiting times are longer in other CHO's. Factors such as availability of specialist CAMHS clinicians, current vacancies and difficulties in recruiting in an international context can impact on wait times in various areas. CAMHS waiting lists are also impacted by capacities in other parts of the system - where young people may not receive early intervention and thus their needs escalate necessitating referrals to specialist CAMHS.

The HSE has made CAMHS and youth mental health service improvement a priority. The Child and Youth Mental Health Service Improvement Programme is an initiative to build capacity in CAMHS and youth mental health. A significant body of work is underway within CAMHS to offer the best possible service to children and young people who require this service. The HSE is actively working to reduce the CAMHS waiting list and there are a number of service improvement initiatives taking place as a result of the Maskey Report and Mental Health Commission reports as well as a specific waiting list initiative that commenced in 2022 and has continued in 2023. In 2022, 750 additional



young people were seen from the waiting list following additional once-off funding being made available from June to December. In 2023, new additional funding was secured, again on a once – off basis in an effort to further reduce the waiting lists in CAMHS. As of August 2023, 660 additional children and young people have been seen from the waiting lists as part of this initiative.

### **Establishment of National Child and Youth Mental Health Office**

A new Assistant National Director (A.N.D.) for Child and Youth Mental Health commenced post in September 2023 to provide leadership, operational oversight and delegated management of all service delivery across child and youth mental health services in Ireland. The A.N.D. is responsible for managing and coordinating service planning activities, partnership and capacity building, the development of service plans, and setting of service standards right across child and youth mental health services in Ireland. In addition, a National Clinical Lead for Youth Mental Health has also been appointed. This newly established office demonstrates the HSE's commitment to CAMHS and youth mental health service improvement.

### **CAMHS Recruitment and Service Improvement**

In recent years, the HSE have advertised nationally and internationally for CAMHS professionals, and have engaged with international recruitment agencies with little success due to worldwide shortages in the field. In order to address this, the HSE is seeking to fully utilise opportunities offered by telehealth technologies to mitigate recruitment challenges and modernise delivery of mental health care. In addition, National Mental Health have committed to a programme of work to inform the development of the CAMHS Telehealth Hub initiative 2021-2024 on a phased basis, informed by testing and monitoring.

While investment in CAMHS and youth mental health service improvement has grown over the past decade, the HSE is committed to making substantial changes and improvements in the mental health services provided in Ireland to children and adolescents. However, it is important to note that specialist CAMHS are not suitable for everyone. Young people with mild to moderate mental health difficulties can access support at Primary Care level either through the HSE or through a range of organisations fully or partially funded by the HSE. Organisations that provide education and other support/clinical interventions at primary care level for young people and their families include;

1. [Jigsaw](#) who are funded by the HSE to provide early intervention mental health services which focus on the needs of 12-25-year-olds. Staffed by fully-trained professionals across a number of disciplines, Jigsaw provide a range of community based mental health services for young people experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties. During the pandemic they adapted their service models to ensure continuity of support by delivering therapeutic interventions by phone and online.
2. **Text 50808**, funded by the HSE, was formally launched in June 2020. The service provides immediate support for people going through mental health or emotional crisis. By the end of the year the service was providing over 5,000 'conversations' per month to support people of all ages.
3. The HSE also support online counselling providers [MyMind.org](#) and [Turn2Me](#) who provide counselling and psychotherapy to young people.
4. [SpunOut.ie](#) provide articles and information for young people on many different topics including mental health on their website spunout.ie



I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Paul Braham', written in a cursive style.

---

**Paul Braham**  
**Senior Operations Manager (Area DON)**  
**National Mental Health Services**