



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta  
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

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Deputy Mark Ward.  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

14<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**PQ Number: 48111/23**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health his views on a presentation (details supplied); if Children are being excluded from CAMHS because they also have a diagnosis of autism; the mental Health supports that are available within CAMHS to young people with autism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Mark Ward**

Details Supplied: the AV Room presentation given by Families for Reform of CAMHS

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Dear Deputy Ward,

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 Mental Health Services (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.

As per the CAMHS Operational Guideline (2019), children or adolescents referred to community CAMHS must fulfil the following criteria:

- The child or adolescent is under 18 years old
- Consent for the referral has been obtained from the parent(s)
- The child or adolescent presents with a suspected moderate to severe mental disorder
- Comprehensive treatment at primary care level has been unsuccessful or was not appropriate in the first instance

The CAMHS Operational Guidelines (2019), clearly set out the type of referrals suitable for CAMHS and the types of referrals not suitable for CAMHS. These are listed below.

#### **Types of Referrals Suitable for CAMHS**

The list below gives some guidance on what constitutes a moderate to severe mental disorder. However, it is important to note that the CAMHS Operational Guideline is not a clinical guideline, therefore not all children or young person will fit neatly into a diagnostic category:



- Moderate to severe Anxiety disorders.
- Moderate to severe Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder/ Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD/ADD).
- Moderate to severe Depression.
- Bipolar Affective Disorder.
- Psychosis.
- Moderate to severe Eating Disorder.
- Suicidal ideation in the context of a mental disorder.

### **Types of Referrals Not Suitable for CAMHS**

CAMHS is not suitable for children or adolescents whose difficulties primarily are related to learning problems, social problems, behavioral problems or mild mental health problems. There are many services available to respond to these needs for children and adolescents, e.g. HSE Primary Care Services, HSE Disability Services, Tusla – The Child and Family Agency, Jigsaw, National Educational Psychology Services (NEPS) and local Family Resource Centers.

CAMHS does not accept the following children or adolescents where there is no evidence of a moderate to severe mental disorder present:

- Those with an intellectual disability. Their diagnostic and support needs are best met in HSE Social Care/HSE Disability Services. However those children or adolescents with a mild intellectual disability with moderate to severe mental disorder are appropriate to be seen by CAMHS.
- Those with a moderate to severe intellectual disability and moderate to severe mental disorder. Their needs are best met by CAMHS Mental Health Intellectual Disability (MHID) teams.
- Those whose presentation is a developmental disorder. Examples of these could include Dyslexia or Developmental Coordination Disorder. Their needs are best met in HSE Primary Care services and/or Children’s Disability Network Teams.
- Those who require assessments or interventions that relate to educational needs. Their needs are best met in services such as Children’s Disability Network Teams or the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS).
- Those who present with child protection or welfare issues where there is no moderate to severe mental disorder present. Their needs are best met by Tusla – The Child and Family Agency.
- Those who have a diagnosis of Autism. Their needs are generally best met in services such as HSE Primary Care and/or HSE Disability Services. Where the child or adolescent presents with more complex needs, for example, with a moderate to severe mental disorder and autism, it is the role of CAMHS to work with disability teams to treat the mental health disorder associated with the primary diagnosis of autism.

The HSE service best suited to an individual is determined by the level of the intellectual disability and of the mental health difficulty. When information indicates that there is more than one HSE service that could best meet the child or adolescent’s needs, consultation should take place with the other service to determine which is the most appropriate or whether a joint approach to assessment and intervention is indicated.

The mental health policies, *Vision for Change* and *Sharing the Vision*, recommends the development of mental health intellectual disability (MHID) teams, to provide population-wide coverage and ensure fair and equal access to mental healthcare for people of all ages with an intellectual disability.



Published in 2022, the Model of Service for CAMHS-ID (Intellectual Disability) provides a framework for development of specialist mental health services for children and adolescents with an intellectual disability, so they can access services in the same way as their peers of normal cognitive ability.

In line with the Model of Service, and supported by development funding, significant work has been undertaken over a number of years to enhance service provision, including by standing up four multi-disciplinary specialist CAMHS-ID teams. The Model of Service recommends that 16 CAMHS-ID teams in total are established to serve the current population. Work continues to form additional teams with a further seven CAMHS-ID services in development, but not yet meeting the criteria of a starter team.

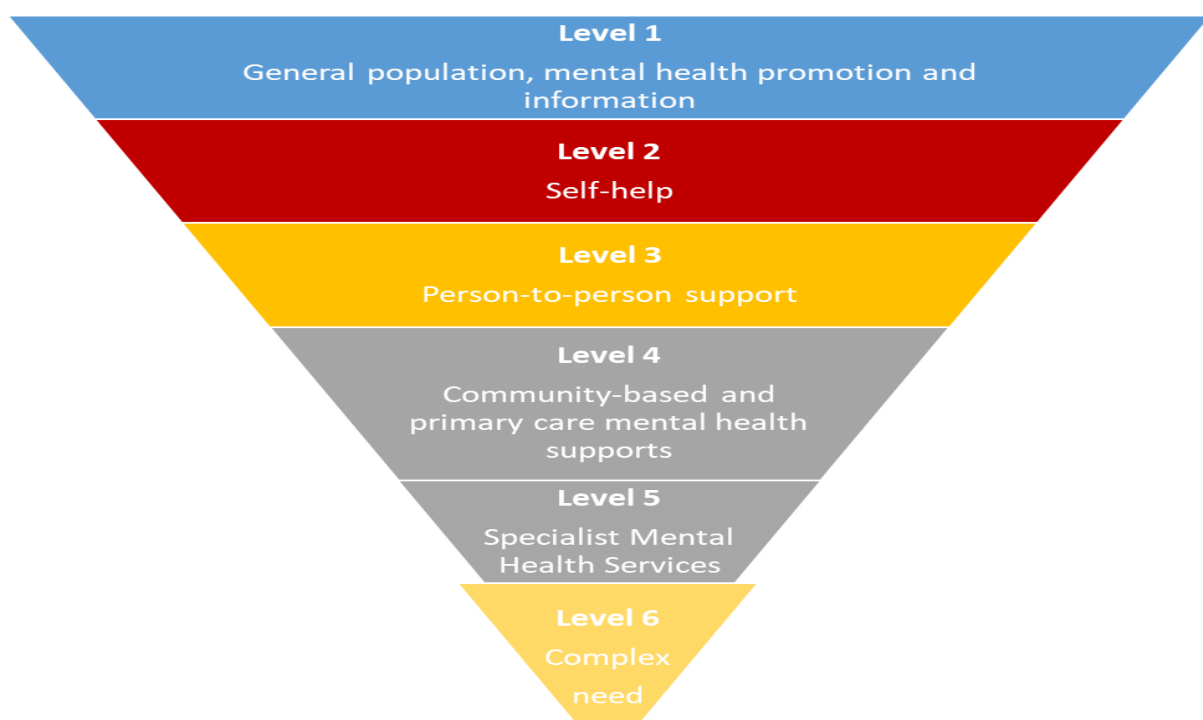
If there is no CAMHS ID team in their area, children and young persons should attend their local Community Disability Network Team for intervention in relation to their disability and their GP if there is a concern regarding a moderate to severe mental disorder, who in turn can discuss with the catchment area Executive Clinical Director.

### **Mental Health Supports and Services in the Community**

*Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone* (2020) (StV) provides a policy framework for the continued development and enhancement of mental health services in Ireland. The policy adopts a lifecycle approach to address the needs of the population by placing the individual at the centre of service delivery at different stages throughout the lifecycle. It aims to enhance the provision of mental health services and supports across a continuum of care using a stepped model of care approach in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for each service user.

The diagram below summarises the main supports available across those different levels.

### **Model of mental health support and services in Ireland**





**Level 1:** General Population, mental health promotion and information services for all including the following Yourmentalhealth.ie, Minding your Wellbeing, Stress Control, Keep Well

**Level 2:** Self Help Services at this level provide people with advice and guidance around activities they can engage in themselves e.g. Samaritans, Text50808, MyMind, Turn2Me, Jigsaw and Pieta

**Level 3:** Person to Person Support formal and informal support services which can be one to one or in group settings, online or by phone / text, email or online

**Level 4** Community-based and primary care mental health services. Services at this level are delivered by people with a suitable qualification and include counselling services that can be accessed directly by members of the public

**Level 5** Specialist Mental Health Services

**Level 6** Services for those with complex needs

Individuals who require further information on the most appropriate supports and services available are advised to consult with their GP or call the YourMentalHealth Information Line (1800 111 888) anytime day or night or visit yourmentalhealth.ie

Further information can be found by consulting with the CAMHS Operational Guidelines. Please see below:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/camhs/operational-guideline/camhs-operational-guideline-2019.pdf>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Braham', written over a horizontal line.

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