



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
[@hselive](https://twitter.com/hselive)

t: 01-6207304

e: PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie

Deputy Cian O'Callaghan.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

07th February 2024

PQ Number: 52290/23

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he is aware of a problem that some psychotherapists and psychologists are facing whereby they can not get appropriate rooms or space to run their services to meet the demand (details supplied); if he will address this issue to aid the reduction of waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Cian O'Callaghan

Details Supplied: *A number of psychotherapists and psychologists who provide services and support for adult survivors of abuse and trauma can only operate for two/three days a week due to lack of space to run their services. · This specifically relates to having available rooms in HSE centres. · The Government often refer people to these services but haven't addressed the capacity problems. · One example of this is a full-time psychologist who was only able to operate for two days a week because no room could be provided I the Strand Health Centre. Could the Minister look into this?*

Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

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.

The HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) is a professional, confidential, counselling and psychotherapy service available free of charge in all regions of the country. The HSE NCS delivers counselling to adults who have experienced childhood abuse [CAPA] as well as Counselling in Primary Care [CIPC] to adults who hold a GMS card experiencing mild to moderate psychological difficulties. The NCS is available in all HSE community health areas. Counselling is provided from HSE offices with CIPC primarily delivered from Primary Care Centres.

The NCS is a demand led service. Demand for counselling is increasing year on year -there was a 16% increase in referrals to CIPC in 2023 (based on latest data available compared with same period in 2022). This means that having sufficient counselling rooms available to deliver a timely service is an ongoing challenge.

During the pandemic the majority of service delivery was remotely provided via telehealth thus accommodation issues were not significant however since returning to full in person service provision accommodation has been an ongoing challenge. With access to suitable rooms in PC centres particularly challenging for the NCS where other health services also require access to these rooms.



In situations where there is a lack of access to accommodation the NCS offers clients the option to attend appointments either by phone or video [telehealth]. Clients are also offered the option to attend in another location.

Telehealth is not a feasible option for some clients and the NCS has seen a decline in client uptake of telehealth options since the Pandemic. In 2023 26% of clients availed of telehealth this compares with a high of 73% in 2021. For some clients telehealth may not be feasible due to poor broadband, lack of privacy or lack of access to digital devices. Travel to an alternative location may not be feasible due to lack of transport or prohibitive cost of additional travel. In addition, the majority of clients state a personal preference for in person counselling.

Mental Health Services will continue to liaise with Primary Care Services to inform the design and development of new Primary Care Centres, and will highlight the need for appropriate accommodation and access to existing accommodation for NCS clients.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Mc Cusker', written in a cursive style.

Tony Mc Cusker
General Manager
National Mental Health Services