



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta  
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar,  
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Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2024

**PQ Number: 52610/23**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the number of adults waiting for eating disorder treatment services; and the amount of time they have been waiting, by CHO, in tabular form. - Holly Cairns**

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Dear Deputy Cairns,

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 has prioritised eating disorder (ED) services as part of its National Clinical Programmes (NCP) which aims to develop high-quality, person-centred, integrated care through a clinician-led, evidence-based approach to service reform.

While a small number of people benefit from more intensive treatment through day programmes or inpatient care, the most effective treatment setting is in the community, close to people's homes. Adults and children who may be experiencing an eating disorder can be referred to their local Community Mental Health Team. There are 112 adult Community teams and 75 Child and Adolescent teams in Ireland. Dedicated community-based eating disorder services, where multidisciplinary teams have specialist training, can provide evidence-based care and treatment.

#### **Model of Care for Eating Disorders and Specialist Teams**

In January 2018, the HSE published a National Model of Care for Eating Disorders (MOC) in partnership with College of Psychiatrists' of Ireland and Bodywhys. In the absence of a pre-existing dedicated eating disorder infrastructure or strategy, this Model of Care document has been developed in order to guide the provision of high quality, accessible eating disorder services in Ireland. Key recommendations include:

- the development of a national network of dedicated eating disorder teams embedded within the mental health service
- a stepped model of outpatient, day patient and inpatient care provision based on clinical need
- the development of a skilled, trained workforce



The NCPED aims to establish an ED network (8 adult teams and 8 CAMHS teams) in accordance with the agreed Model of Care 2018. These multidisciplinary teams provide specialist eating disorder assessment and treatment in the community and are the foundations of delivering quality eating disorder care across the stepped model of care. Today there are 10 NCPED (5 CAMHS and 5 Adult teams) at various stages of development across the HSE.

Early access to assessment and intervention for eating disorders is a key aim of the NCP - ED. Since 2018 the NCP have collected and analysed data from specialist eating disorders teams to demonstrate the impact of the teams on outcomes for service users. Data from 2018 – 2022 demonstrates that 54% of service users were assessed within 4 weeks and 76% within 8 weeks.

The NCP - ED 5 year data infographic is available here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/mental-health/eating-disorders/data-infographics/>

Outside of the specialist eating disorder teams, people with eating disorders present to health services at primary care level to their GP and local mental health teams. Referral rates to existing community eating disorder teams have significantly surpassed predicted demand and capacity estimates made prior to the pandemic. Given this increase in demand for eating disorders services, and the recent preliminary census 2022 data showing an overall increase in population, a review of the Eating Disorder Model of Care is planned during 2024. The outcomes of this review will inform the ED teams' staffing requirements from 2025 onwards.

Average wait time data for eating disorder services is not available by CHO in the absence of comprehensive data collection systems. The average wait time depends on the severity of the presentation. Generally, urgent presentations are prioritised to be seen within 2 to 8 weeks.

Established CAMHS and Adult ED teams have active wait list support initiatives through the provision of psychoeducation resources, signposting to Bodywhys and liaising with primary care.

In addition, the following supports are available.

**Family Supports:** Each team offers family supports and education, some teams have dedicated group programmes in place. First line evidence based intervention for children is Family Based Therapy (FBT). This is provided by all ED CAMHS Teams. All families are provided with information and resources and are signposted to use HSE Self Care App. All families are signed posted to completed PiLAR online family education programme with Bodywhys (see below).

**Bodywhys:** The HSE provides funding annually to Bodywhys, the national advocacy agency for people with eating disorders and their families. Bodywhys provide a range of services (support groups, online groups, email and family programmes) for adults and young people with eating disorders, and their families.

The HSE also supports Bodywhys to run the PiLaR (Peer Led Resilience) Programme, a 4-week online modular based programme for parents, friends and carers of a person with an eating disorder to build resilience and gain support in their role as a supporter/friend. In 2022 926 families attended the programme.

The NCPED is currently working with Bodywhys to establish a national reference group of carer and service users.



### **HSE Eating Disorder Self Care App**

In March 2019, the HSE launched the first Self Care App which provides valuable information for those:

- with an eating disorder caring for someone with an eating disorder
- worried about developing an eating disorder
- diagnosed or are recovering from an eating disorder

Further information can be found by consulting with the following links:

[Eating Disorders - HSE.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

[HSE Eating Disorder Self Help App](#)

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Mc Cusker'.

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**Tony Mc Cusker**  
**General Manager**  
**National Mental Health Services**