



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](mailto:@hselive)

t: 01-6207304

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

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

02/07/24

**PQ Number: 18560/24**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if there are HSE-funded respite services available to children who solely have a mental health diagnosis; if so, the estimated cost of these services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Mark Ward**

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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.

#### **Community CAMHS**

CAMHS provide mental health services to those aged up to 18 years, who have moderate to severe mental disorders that require the input of a multi-disciplinary mental health team. Community CAMHS refers to child and adolescent mental health services that are delivered in outpatient and day hospital settings.

The vast majority of CAMHS interventions are delivered in the community, close to people's homes. The assessments and interventions provided by CAMHS teams depend on the severity and complexity of a child or adolescent's presentation. These assessments and interventions are carried out in partnership with the child or adolescent and their parent(s).

When deciding if a child or adolescent needs to attend CAMHS, a number of factors are considered by the CAMHS team. These include consideration of the child or adolescent's clinical presentation, their level of social and family support and the availability of resources and treatment options at primary care level or within community networks.

#### **Inpatient CAMHS**

CAMHS Inpatient Units offer assessment and treatment to children and adolescents up to the age of 18 with severe and often complex mental disorders. CAMHS Inpatient Units are known as Approved Centres and they are registered, regulated and inspected by the Mental Health Commission. This means CAMHS Inpatient Units are subject to the Mental Health Act, 2001, as amended, corresponding regulations, and the Mental Health Commission Codes of Practice.



There are regulatory requirements in relation to care and treatment, the facility and premises, staffing, governance and individual care planning. Currently there are four HSE CAMHS Inpatient Units across the country. Their aim is to provide evidence-based assessment and treatment for children and adolescents with severe and often complex mental disorders. The inpatient service provides appropriate assessment, recovery focused treatment and education within a therapeutic environment, with the ultimate aim of achieving clinical improvement.

When a decision is being made to admit someone to an inpatient unit, the child or adolescent, their families and the CAMHS team will consider the clinical improvements expected against any potential negative impact from an inpatient stay. These may include the impact of being separated from family and friends, any disruption to their education, or the potential for further trauma from being admitted to an inpatient unit. Children and adolescents should be able to maintain contact with their families and friends during their inpatient stay, and their education and future health should not be impaired through a prolonged stay in an inpatient unit.

### **CAMHS Hub(s)**

As part of the HSEs Corporate Plan 2020-2023, work is underway to rollout five CAMHS Hubs learning sites in CHO 2, CHO 3, CHO 4, CHO 6 and CHO 8. Currently CHO 2 and CHO 6 are operational while CHO 3, CHO 4 and CHO 8 experienced delays due to the current recruitment controls.

CAMHS Hubs provide intensive brief mental health interventions to support CAMHS Teams in delivering enhanced responses to children, young people and their families/carers, in times of acute mental health crisis where it is determined the needs of the child or young person require a rapid response, time-bound intensive brief intervention. CAMHS Hub Teams will provide a blended approach to the location of treatment for the child or young person, with a mix of care in the home, community setting or virtually as deemed appropriate

The CAMHS Hub Team will use the skills of the multidisciplinary Team to assess the child or young person's needs and to develop an individual care plan that supports them on their recovery journey. The Model of Care clearly outlines the functions and operational requirements for CAMHS Hubs, which will cater for a small group of service users with the greatest needs.

### **Respite Services**

Respite services are generally offered to children with disabilities who have complex care needs for a specific period of time with the intent of providing temporary relief to the main carers and their family. At present these services are organised at local health office level through the Public health nurse, GP and through voluntary organisations.

The nature of mental illness tends to be relapsing and remitting and therefore the needs of children with mental illness are generally more appropriately managed by community mental health services, intensive day support such as day hospitals or CAMHS hubs or by specialist CAMHS inpatient services.



There are currently no plans to introduce respite care services for children with mental illness as there are already a range of mental health community, day and inpatient services available.

If a child currently requires respite services outside of the mental health services they can access them at their local Health Office through the Public health nurse, GP and through voluntary organisations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sarah Hennessy'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

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Sarah Hennessy  
General Manager  
Child and Youth Mental Health Office