



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta  
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar,  
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Deputy Sorca Clarke.  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

08<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**PQ Number: 5436/24**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the supports that are available to people who are dealing with sudden and traumatic deaths of a friend or family member. -Sorca Clarke**

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Dear Deputy Clarke,

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 provide a range of bereavement supports while also working in partnership with the voluntary and community sectors. The HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) is an essential part of HSE mental health provision. It provides a professional, confidential, counselling and psychotherapy service. The service is available in all HSE community health areas and operates from over 240 locations throughout Ireland.

The HSE NCS provide bereavement counselling through the Counselling in Primary Care Service (CiPC) at levels 3 and 4 in line with the Adult Bereavement Care Pyramid (Irish Hospice foundation, 2020). Further details on the pyramid can be found here:

<https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Adult-Bereavement-Care-Pyramid.pdf>

Details of services available for those experiencing bereavement as well as services offered by the NCS are outlined below.

#### **Level 1 - HSE Public Health Information Campaign**

The HSE website details useful information and resources for the general public in relation to grief and bereavement and also links services users to bereavement see [www.hse.ie/grief](http://www.hse.ie/grief)

#### **Level 2 - Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) Bereavement Support Line**

This service which is staffed by trained volunteers provides a listening and support service and is available Monday-Friday from 10am- 1pm -1800 80 70 77. The NCS has collaborated with the IHF who can signpost callers to HSE counselling services where appropriate.



### **Level 3 - Counselling in Primary Care (CiPC)**

The HSE CiPC service is available throughout Ireland. CiPC provides:

- Generic counselling for mild to moderate psychological distress
- It is accessible to GMS patients only
- Referral by GP or other health professional
- Initial Assessment and 8 session counselling contract is offered
- Bereavement/Loss is a significant reason for referral to CiPC. In a recent study, almost one third of clients identified bereavement as the reason they sought counselling with CiPC. (HSE CiPC Research Group (In Press) Changing Lives for the Better: A national Evaluation of the Counselling in Primary Care (CiPC))

### **Level 3 - Bereavement Counselling Service for family members bereaved during the COVID 19 Pandemic**

Dedicated Bereavement Counselling Services are currently provided by the HSE NSC in CHO areas 1, 8, 5, and 9 as part of the HSE Psychosocial response to COVID 19: This offers a Bereavement Counselling Support Service to family members bereaved during the pandemic:

- Specialist Bereavement Counselling Service
- Available to both GMS and non-GMS patients
- Clients can self-refer or be referred by a GP/Health Professional

### **Level 4 - Specialist Trauma Informed Bereavement Counselling**

- The NCS provides Trauma Informed Bereavement Counselling for more complex cases in some CHO areas (CHO 1, 8 and 9)
- This service is available to both GMS and non-GMS patients
- Clients can self-refer or be referred by a GP/Health Professional

Individuals may be referred or self-refer to the NCS at different points in their bereavement journey. The NCS offers a stepped-care approach depending on contextual factors of an individual's circumstances. In the immediate aftermath of bereavement, support is the most appropriate intervention which includes listening and validation, information provision, activating existing family and community resources.

Bereavement counselling is generally offered when a person's usual coping resources available from family, friends and community are not sufficient to support them or where a bereavement is complex. Research indicates that it is generally not advised to offer bereavement counselling in the first 6 months following a bereavement, as it may pathologise or interfere with the normal grieving process.

Contact details for HSE NCS CiPC and bereavement services can be found at:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/counsellingpc/>

Further information on organisations funded by the HSE offering bereavement resources, supports and services can be found here:

<https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/services-support/bereavement/>



I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Mc Cusker'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and 'M'.

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