



Deputy Richard Bruton.
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

27th March 2024

PQ Number: 6688/24

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he will outline the trend in referrals to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service over the past five years; how the level of staffing and service has grown in those years; if he will outline the efforts to fill new post created and indicate how the level of unfilled positions have evolved; and if he will outline the approach to reform of services delivery which she is undertaking. -Richard Bruton

Dear Deputy Bruton,

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.

Health Service Executive (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 a multi-disciplinary mental health teams.

Trends in Referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

The table below demonstrates the total number of referrals received and total number of referrals accepted from 2019 to 2023 for CAMHS.

CAMHS Activity 2019 – August 2023

CAMHS	2019	2020	2021	2022	Aug 2023	Variance 2019 vs 2020	Variance 2020 vs 2021	Variance 2021 vs 2022
Referrals Received	18,831	17,436	22,212	21,762	15,317	-7%	27%	-2%
Referrals Accepted	13,190	12,531	14,439	13,086	8,873	-5%	15%	-9%

* Please be advised that due to the FORSA industrial action, data quoted for 2023 is up to end of August 2023.



Mental Health Workforce: Staffing

Based on successive mental health policies, significant investment in community mental health services has been made over the past decade. This investment focused mostly on increasing human resources within community mental health teams. Over the past decade, targeted service enhancements have been made possible by development funding, which has enhanced the overall range and quality of services available. Over the period from 2011 – January 2024, an **additional 20 CAMHS Teams** have been established, from 56 in 2011 to the **76 teams** currently in place. There are currently **806 WTEs*** across the 76 teams and staffing has increased across all disciplines since 2011 with an additional 330.3 WTEs (of which 286.4 WTE are clinical staff).

CAMHS	Administrative Support Staff	Child/Social Care Worker	Clinical Psychologist	Consultant Psychiatrist	Nurse	Occupational Therapist	Other Staff	Other Therapist	Registrar/SHO	Senior Registrar	Social Worker	Speech & Language Therapist	Total
CHO 1	15.3	1.9	5.5	6.5	23.8	4.6	2.8	2.8	8.5	0.0	7.4	3.7	82.8
CHO 2	10.5	3.1	5.1	6.1	12.6	4.5	0.5	2.3	10.0	3.8	7.2	1.8	67.5
CHO 3	10.4	0.0	11.6	7.3	13.7	6.0	0.0	0.0	5.5	3.0	10.8	4.0	72.3
CHO 4	23.2	4.8	18.1	11.0	13.9	10.0	3.4	0.0	12.3	4.3	21.5	12.1	134.6
CHO 5	12.6	3.8	10.3	7.2	16.5	5.6	2.5	1.1	7.0	1.0	5.8	2.8	76.2
CHO 6	9.9	2.0	8.5	6.4	12.8	5.0	0.0	0.0	8.8	1.7	8.7	7.4	70.9
CHO 7	14.0	5.2	10.1	11.2	14.9	5.5	0.0	1.0	11.8	7.9	8.5	11.5	101.5
CHO 8	19.7	4.4	6.4	10.5	17.4	2.6	1.7	0.9	14.5	3.2	14.1	3.1	98.4
CHO 9	8.6	0.0	17.5	12.5	11.9	8.5	0.0	0.0	11.0	5.5	16.0	10.2	101.8
National	124.1	25.2	93.1	78.6	137.5	52.2	10.9	8.1	89.4	30.5	100.0	56.6	806.0

*Data as per August 2023

Recruitment and Retention

Coupled with an ever increasing demand for mental health services, the availability of skilled staff is a significant challenge whereby demand outstrips supply in both local and international markets. In an effort to address these challenges, the HSE Recruitment, Reform and Resourcing (RRR) Programme was established in June 2022. The RRR Programme introduces a focused capacity to grow our workforce and support services to meet the projected increased workforce demand. The Programme operates under the HSE's five Strategic Resourcing Pillars:

- Engage and retain our workforce
- Attracting a high performing and diverse workforce
- Build the healthcare talent of the future
- Support the health and wellbeing of our workforce
- Build a positive and inclusive workplace culture

The RRR programme is working with educational institutions and professional bodies along with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders. The goal is to identify current and future gaps and resourcing deficiencies within the organisations' resourcing cohort and resourcing pipeline. The RRR structure brings together the existing Recruitment Operating Model (ROM) Programme which is working to reduce the time it takes to recruit and to bring the selection decision and control closer to services. The Resourcing Strategy contains actions that have been created by representatives from across services and professions, including Mental Health Services-



This continued development of our services capacity to recruit efficiently, is a key objective of the HSE and this development has been further enhanced by the launch of the Resourcing Strategy in April 2023 to support services as the HSE transitions to the RHA model. Under the Resourcing Strategy, Expert Implementation Groups (EIGs) have worked to identify resourcing challenges within their grade category and professions to recommend resourcing actions to address them. The breadth of actions across the 5 EIGs ensures that the Strategy will balance actions to engage, attract, build, and support the healthcare workforce across all specialty areas including CAMHS.

To date the programme has added additional Trainee psychology places which commenced in September 2023 over a three year period, increased the trainee cohort across Health Social Care Professions, provided additional funded Medical placements and increased the number of training places for undergraduate mental health nursing. These actions, coupled with National Service Plan 2024 commitments for additional staffing (68 WTE), with oversight from the recently created National Office for Child and Youth Mental Health, will enable local areas to improve the recruitment capacity and to grow the workforce required to deliver the range of CAMHS services across the country.

In addition to the actions outlined above, the HSE continues to proactively address recruitment and retention challenges by building a service that is attractive to work in, offering flexible working arrangements and by fully utilising opportunities offered by telehealth and remote working solutions where appropriate.

Reform: Establishment of dedicated HSE Child and Youth Mental Health Office

A dedicated National Child Youth Mental Health Office (CYMHO) was established in September 2023 which has responsibility for the HSE Child and Youth Mental Health Service Improvement Programme. The Office will also provide leadership, operational oversight and enhanced governance across CAMHS services nationally. The office is led by a National Clinical Lead for Child and Youth Mental Health and an Assistant National Director for Child and Youth Mental Health and is supported by a dedicated team. The establishment of this new office will:

- *Deliver major transformational programmes for CAMHS:* The CYMHO will work to improve the timeliness, quality, consistency, and experience of CAMHS for service users through the establishment and implementation of a dedicated Service Improvement Programme. The work of this programme will be guided by published recommendations and recent audits on CAMHS provision.
- *Improve leadership and operational oversight:* Through the creation of a stand-alone office with appropriate governance structures oversight and transparency in how child and youth mental health services are being delivered. Introduction of reporting capabilities will enable continuous operational oversight of service delivery. These structures, once embedded, will also enable coordinated input across service, legislative and policy developments.
- *Assure that HSE programmes are positioned to achieve maximum impact for children and young people:* The CYMHO will work collaboratively with existing programmes being progressed within the HSE, including National Clinical Programmes and the StV Implementation Plan, to assure child and youth mental health interests are fully represented and that their work is integrated and aligned with CYMHO priorities.



- The Child and Youth Mental Health Service Improvement Programme will also be informed by:
 1. findings in the Mental Health Commission's review of CAMHS (2023)
 2. the Maskey Report (2022)
 3. implementing recommendations about CAMHS and youth mental health services in Sharing the Vision, Ireland's national mental health policy
 4. considering future models of care and delivery structures

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Hennessy".

Sarah Hennessy
General Manager
Child and Youth Mental Health Office