



Deputy Holly Cairns
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

27th March 2024

PQ Number: 7725/24

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the current number of patients awaiting treatment from CAMHS in each CHO; the length of time patients have been on said waiting lists, in tabular form; and what steps are being taken to rapidly reduce CAMHS waiting lists. –Holly Cairns

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.

CAMHS provide specialist mental health service 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.

The HSE is committed to addressing waiting list times as a key priority, reflecting our commitment to ensuring accessible, timely, and quality healthcare services for all our patients and service users. In 2023 there was a decrease of 480 children on the waiting list for CAMHS community mental health services, down from 4,239 in December 2022 to 3,891 in August 2023.

Due to the ongoing FORSA industrial action, the table below provides the latest available information on the number of children and young people waiting to be seen by CAMHS as at end of **August 2023**. Please be advised that this data is preliminary and subject to change and amendment pending ongoing review and validation. Age range is not captured.

Aug 2023	Total waiting to be seen	<= 12 weeks No.	> 12 <= 26 weeks No.	>26 <=39 weeks No.	>39 <=52 Weeks No.	>52 Weeks No.
National Total	3,891	1,401	941	549	344	656
CHO 1	294	122	86	46	35	5
CHO 2	233	79	51	34	30	39
CHO 3	297	87	82	46	19	63
CHO 4	937	215	164	122	88	348
CHO 5	254	76	65	44	32	37
CHO 6	604	259	157	118	48	22



CHO 7	417	203	119	49	19	27
CHO 8	695	285	150	73	72	115
CHO 9	160	75	67	17	1	0

Waiting List Initiatives

In 2024, we will continue to focus on streamlining processes, increasing resources, and leveraging technology to reduce waiting times and improve access to healthcare services for children and young people.

The waiting list initiative for 2023 invested a total of €22.7 million in funding which was made available for identified HSE community initiatives, with a focus on orthodontics, primary care child psychology, counselling in primary care, primary care therapies, and CAMHS. Over 14,000 patients were treated as a result of the waiting list initiatives in 2023, with over 1,000* additional cases projected to have been seen within CAMHS alone. This builds further on the 700+ additional cases seen as part of the 2022 waiting list initiative in CAMHS.

Child and Youth Mental Health Office (CYMHO)

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. It also provides leadership, operational oversight and enhanced governance. The office is led by a National Clinical Lead and an Assistant National Director for Child and Youth Mental Health and is supported by a dedicated team.

A key objective of the CYMHO is to improve access and address CAMHS waiting lists arising from increasing demand and case complexity. This includes various measures such as increased collaboration with Primary Care and Disability Services, stronger links with the voluntary and NGO sector and greater use of digital mental health innovations.

A waiting list initiative is underway in six CHO areas, specifically targeting areas where children and young people have waited longer than nine months. This has resulted in 631 children and young people being removed from the list as a result of the initiatives to the end of August 2023 (most up-to-date data available).

The severity of presenting symptoms as well as an assessment of risk is always taken into account in terms of waiting times. Every effort is made to prioritise urgent cases so that the referrals of young people with high-risk presentations are addressed as soon as possible. Nationally, in 2023, 94% of urgent referrals to CAMHS were responded to within three working days, above the ≥90% target.

Currently, the HSE is also delivering targeted waiting list initiatives in primary care, focusing on areas experiencing particular challenges in meeting service demand recognising there are regional variations in access to Primary Care Psychology services, the HSE has taken a coordinated approach to waiting list initiatives, taking into consideration capacity issues across the range of mental health services offered as part of the stepped care service model. In the period from January up to the end of August 2023, the waiting list initiative in Primary Care Child Psychology Services has removed 2119 young people from their waiting lists as a direct result of additional targeted funding under this initiative. The key challenge experienced by CHOs is staff recruitment and work is underway to assess and adjust CHO business plans to ensure they can be delivered.



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 & Youth Mental Health