



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
@hselive

t: 01-6207304

e: PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie

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

9th April 2024

PQ Number: 8988/24

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the number of people waiting for an appointment through the counselling in primary care service by CHO area and by time waiting, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Mark Ward

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.

The HSE National Counselling Service established Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) in July 2013 as a mental health initiative to provide counselling to adults experiencing mild to moderate psychological difficulties who present in the primary care setting. CIPC receives an average of 19,000 referrals per annum. More than 170,000 people have been referred to CIPC since it was established with an average of 2,060 clients attending at any time.

All adults in receipt of a medical card are currently eligible for the service. Access is by referral from the client's GP or a member of the Primary Care Team. CIPC is available in each community health area and is accessible from over 240 locations, mainly primary care centres, situated throughout Ireland.

Waiting times for CIPC vary across the country depending on referral rates, service delivery model, staffing levels and individual geographic factors. CIPC is a demand led service with the counselling contract offered based on the assessed needs of the client. As the number of clients seeking counselling exceeds the number of counselling spaces available at any one time there is a waiting time for counselling.

Timely access to counselling is important not just for a positive service user experience but also crucially at a clinical level. The CIPC national evaluation study, Changing Lives [2022] has demonstrated that the earlier intervention can be provided the more likely there is to be a positive outcome from counselling in terms of improved client well-being, symptom reduction and reduced psychological distress. Table 1 below lists the lists the number of people waiting for counselling with the CIPC service by CHO area as at the end of January 2024 [latest available data].



CIPC received additional funding in 2023 as part of the **HSE 2023 Waiting List Action Plan** to deliver reductions in waiting lists numbers and waiting times. **2,637 additional clients** were removed from NCS Waiting lists during 2023 as a result of this additional funding. This initiative helped to improve client access to CIPC. To date in 2024 no additional waiting list funding has been granted.

Table 1 Number of People waiting for CIPC x CHO and Time Waiting as at 31st January 2024

| CHO Area | < 1 Month | 1-3 Mths | 3-6 Mths | 6 Mths + | CHO Total |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| CHO 1 | 52 | 136 | 178 | 115 | 481 |
| CHO 2 | 19 | 126 | 72 | 140 | 357 |
| CHO 3 | 38 | 108 | 147 | 68 | 361 |
| CHO 4 | 94 | 218 | 273 | 68 | 653 |
| CHO 6 | 56 | 85 | 143 | 0 | 284 |
| CHO 7 | 135 | 121 | 25 | 1 | 282 |
| CHO 8 | 100 | 342 | 177 | 189 | 808 |
| CHO 9 | 124 | 223 | 203 | 32 | 582 |
| National Total | 618 | 1359 | 1218 | 613 | 3808 |

*NB Data for CHO 5 not available

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Mc Cusker
General Manager
National Mental Health Services