



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar,
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Deputy Fergus O'Dowd
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

27th February 2024

PQ Number: 2456/24

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health to provide an update on the Programme for Government commitment to develop and increase access to talk therapies and improve access to specialist expertise, when it is required, in line with Sharing the Vision - a Mental Health Policy for Everyone, across each of the CHO areas since the establishment of the current Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter -Fergus O'Dowd

Dear Deputy O'Dowd,

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.

There are currently two separate but linked initiatives underway that support the commitment to increase access to talk therapies and related specialist expertise across HSE CHOs.

The demonstration of a Model of Care for adults accessing talk therapies while attending specialist mental health services is progressing well. 5 pilot sites have been established, with three General Adult Community Mental Health Teams participating in each. Clinicians with the required skills and expertise have been recruited to fill dedicated posts in the pilot sites. In Quarter 1, 2023, a national learning network event was held to provide opportunities for practical learning across the CHO pilot sites. The National Suicide Research Foundation has been engaged to evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of the Model of Care. This commenced with initial meetings with staff in the pilot sites in Quarter 2. The preliminary findings and full report arising from this evaluation will inform the further roll out of the Model of Care across all CHOs.

Recommendation 16 of Sharing the Vision states that 'Access to a range of counselling supports and talk therapies in community/primary care should be available on the basis of identified need so that all individuals, across the lifespan, with a mild-to-moderate mental health difficulty can receive prompt access to accessible care through their GP or Primary care Centre. Counselling supports and talk therapies must be delivered by appropriately qualified and accredited professionals'. Reporting to the Primary Care Workstream Group, a sub-group is progressing the implementation of this recommendation. To date the working group has undertaken a mapping of current offerings and review of recent evaluation reports into existing talk therapy services. These are informing a position



paper outlining a layered care service delivery model which is currently being drafted and will go out to stakeholders for consultation in the coming months.

In addition, the HSE funds a number of Community and Voluntary Sector partners, including for example MyMind to provide talk therapies. MyMind provides a range of counselling and psychotherapy services online, and face-to-face across the country. Services are available for children, adolescents, adults, couples and families in a wide variety of different languages. HSE funding to MyMind allows for the provision of low cost/free counselling sessions to the most economically disadvantaged, and subsidised sessions for those who are unemployed, employed part-time, or students.

The HSE also continues to provide guided CBT online through our partnership with digital health company, SilverCloud Health in the provision of evidence-based online mental health and behavioural healthcare solutions in an effort to make comprehensive mental health support widely available. Programmes are evidence-based interventions using clinically proven CBT, with the full course supported for 8 weeks, and self-guided thereafter. SilverCloud's platform provides a private and confidential space for patients or clients to navigate their thoughts and feelings across smartphone, tablet or computer 24/7.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Mc Cusker', written in a cursive style.

Tony Mc Cusker
General Manager
National Mental Health Services