



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta  
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

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

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024

**PQ Number: 33935/24**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the progress being made on the Maskey report recommendations; if staff vacancies have impacted progress; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Mark Ward**

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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.

In January 2022, the HSE published the Report on the Look-Back Review into CAMHS in South Kerry (Maskey Report). Conducted in accordance with the 'HSE Incident Management Framework' (2020), and the 'HSE Look-Back Review Process Guideline' (2015), the purpose of the review was to consider potential issues relating to the clinical practice of a Non-Consultant Hospital Doctor (NCHD) with regard to prescribing, care planning, diagnostics and clinical supervision between 1 July 2016 and 19 April 2021.

The Maskey Report found that the care received by 240 young people did not meet the necessary standards. It also identified deficits in respect of governance, supervision and oversight, clinical practice and the overall functioning and administrative processes, which contributed to the sub-standard care received by these children and young people.

Thirty-five recommendations were made addressing areas such as re-establishing trust in CAMHS, governance of the service, delivery of clinical services, improved clinical practice and the use of information and communication technology to support service delivery. A considerable work programme involving 63 targeted actions is underway in CAMHS, at local and national level, to ensure full implementation of all 35 recommendations in the Maskey Report. In total, all 63 actions have commenced both locally and nationally. The total number of completed actions to date is 39, leaving 24 in-progress (including 1 action not started).



As announced by An Taoiseach 27/02/22, three national CAMHS audits have been undertaken in response to the Maskey Report. These include a review of prescribing practice, an audit of adherence to the COG and qualitative research into lived experiences of those using CAMHS.

### **1. Audit of CAMHS prescribing practice**

An independent expert team conducted a national review of prescribing practice in CAMHS. The expert team was administratively supported by the HSE National Centre for Clinical Audit and HSE Community Operations. The final Audit report was published on the HSE website on the 28th July 2023. The national audit achieved a 100% response rate from community CAMHS teams.

The audit did not find evidence of overprescribing or problems with polypharmacy; and compliance exceeded 90%, for all but one of the standards measured.

On the basis of audit findings, the expert team has made a number of recommendations, which have been accepted by the HSE's National Oversight Group and incorporated into the CYMHO 3 Year Action Plan, including the:

- Immediate implementation of a national software for patient records in CAMHS.
- Development of national guidelines for prescribing psychotropic medication.
- Formation of a National Drugs and Therapeutics Committee and conducting ongoing / additional audits.

### **2. Audit of compliance with the CAMHS Operational Guideline (COG)**

Published in 2019, the COG sets out best practice for the pathway and service delivery for those requiring the support of CAMHS. It builds on the 'CAMHS Standard Operating Procedure' (2015) and was developed following an extensive review and consultation process that took into consideration the views of service users, family members, front line staff, management and partner organisations.

An audit of compliance with the COG has been completed and there was a 100% response rate from all CAMHS Teams. The report was published in Q1 2024. The findings indicate that the majority of teams understand their roles and responsibilities and are in the process of implementing the COG. The key barriers for adherence to the COG have been reported as staffing, lack of ICT infrastructure and team capacity and resources, including team coordination. Building on audit findings, the report makes a number of recommendations, which have also been incorporated into the HSEs CYMHO Action Plan. These recommendations include:

- Internal audit framework and processes
- Recruitment of key personnel
- Progressing a fit for purpose ICT infrastructure

A number of these recommendations are already part of existing service improvement programmes and reflected in the Sharing the Vision (StV) 2022 – 2024 Implementation Plan. These areas will, subject to funding, be addressed as part of the HSEs Child & Youth Mental Health Action Plan alongside CHO specific quality improvement plans. The COG is due for review in 2024 in line with the HSE's PPPG framework and the feedback and detail collected from this audit will be used in updating the document.



### **3. Qualitative Research of CAMHS Experiences**

UCC was engaged as an academic partner to conduct qualitative research into CAMHS experiences. This research involved a qualitative study of CAMHS experiences to determine the lived experience of service users, families and carers, staff, referrers and other key stakeholders interacting with the

CAMHS service. The research has been completed and the final report is expected to be published in Q3, 2024.

#### **The National Child & Youth Mental Health Office**

The National Child & Youth Mental Health Office (CYMHO) was established in September 2023 with the recruitment of the post of Assistant National Director and National Clinical lead for Child and Youth Mental Health. These roles are to provide leadership, operational oversight, and enhanced governance across all child and youth mental health services. The AND reports to the HSE National Director for Community Operations and the National Clinical Lead to the National Clinical Advisor Group Lead for Mental Health (NCAGL). They are supported by a dedicated team, currently in development.

The CYMHO has developed a targeted Action Plan outlining the initial three-year delivery priorities and associated actions as part of a HSE Child and Youth Mental Health Service Improvement Programme to deliver accessible, equitable, timely and quality Child and Youth Mental Health Services for all children and their families. The plan takes account of the significant improvement work already underway in CYMHS and provides a roadmap for continued and sustained improvement over the next three years. The CYMHO Action Plan has consolidated any outstanding recommendations and accompanying actions arising from Maskey and other CAMHS reports and reviews. All of these actions will be addressed in the three year plan, which is due for publication in Q3 2024.

#### **Recruitment**

The recruitment and resourcing landscape of the health service is more challenging than ever before. The HSE introduced recruitment control measures in October 2023 and there are also recruitment controls and limits in each Regional Health Area.

As recognised in [Sharing the Vision - A Mental Health Policy for Everyone](#) and the Mental Health Commission's [Independent Review of the Provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) in the State](#) service improvements in Child and Youth Mental Health Services will require increased investment, including investment in CYMHS staffing. Recruitment of key personnel will need to take into consideration population needs and the availability of staff with relevant skills. Subject to available funding, the HSE will continue to build our CYMHS workforce by offering a service that is attractive to work in, by offering flexible working arrangements and by fully utilising opportunities offered by telehealth solutions.

The HSE has been proactive in addressing recruitment challenges by funding targeted initiatives from within mental health resources:

- Targeted engagement with Colleges/Training Bodies and undergraduate students/new graduates to promote opportunities in health and social care professional roles within mental health services
- The HSE has invested €6m annually since 2016 to generate additional Nurse training capacity through collaboration with training colleges/universities. This has resulted in additional annual placements of 130 Nurse undergraduate places (4 year course) and 40 Nurse postgraduate placements (1 year course) each year since 2016



- In conjunction with the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, the HSE has invested €1.5m annually since 2020 in a “Higher Specialist Training” course in order to train 40 additional consultant psychiatrist posts each year.
- The HSE has invested €5m annually since 2016 to recruit 130 assistant psychology posts to help in part to alleviate staffing shortages within mental health.
- Investment in HSE Nurse Sponsorship Scheme for non-nursing staff.
- In 2024, an additional 68 posts were approved to continue to build capacity in CAMHS/Community Mental Health Teams through targeted recruitment of skilled, multi-disciplinary mental health professionals. A dedicated recruitment promotion campaign, Service in the Spotlight, has commenced to further enhance communication. Further details can be found here: <https://careerhub.hse.ie/camhs/>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

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

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**Sarah Hennessy**  
**General Manager**  
**Child & Youth Mental Health**