



Deputy Patricia Ryan  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

11<sup>th</sup> October 2024

***PQ 36990/24 – To ask the Minister for Health to detail the criteria to be met for a child to be put on either the Primary Care, CDNT or CAMHS waiting lists. - Deputy Patricia Ryan***

***Clarification provided on 18th September: PQ relates only to psychology and mental health care groups***

Dear Deputy Ryan,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

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 multi-disciplinary mental health teams.

### **HSE CAMHS Operational Guidelines 2019**

When deciding if a child or adolescent needs to attend CAMHS, a number of factors are considered by the CAMHS team. These include consideration of the child or adolescent's clinical presentation, their level of social and family support and the availability of resources and treatment options at primary care level or within community networks. It is the role of the CAMHS team to decide if the child or adolescent reaches the threshold for community CAMHS, i.e. whether their mental disorder is moderate to severe.

The CAMHS Operational Guidelines (2019), sets out the criteria for the types of referrals suitable for CAMHS and the types of referrals not suitable for CAMHS. Children or adolescents referred to community CAMHS must fulfil the following criteria:

- The child or adolescent is under 18 years old
- Consent for the referral has been obtained from the parent(s)
- The child or adolescent presents with a suspected moderate to severe mental disorder
- Comprehensive treatment at primary care level has been unsuccessful or was not appropriate in the first instance



## **Types of Referrals Suitable for CAMHS**

Mental disorders are often described on a continuum of severity, ranging from mild to moderate to severe. A number of factors are taken into account when defining whether someone has a moderate to severe mental disorder and these include the diagnosis, formulation, the duration of the symptoms and level of functioning in daily living. In practice, the term moderate to severe means that the mental disorder is severe enough to cause substantial distress to the child or their family or others. The child or adolescent would have a significant impairment in functioning in various aspects of their life including development, family relationships, school, peers, self-care and play or leisure activities.

The list below gives some guidance on what constitutes a moderate to severe mental disorder. However, it is important to note that not all children or young people will fit neatly into a diagnostic category:

- Moderate to severe Anxiety disorders
- Moderate to severe Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder/ Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD/ADD)
- Moderate to severe Depression
- Bipolar Affective Disorder
- Psychosis
- Moderate to severe Eating Disorder
- Suicidal ideation in the context of a mental disorder

## **Types of Referrals Not Suitable for CAMHS**

CAMHS is not suitable for children or adolescents whose difficulties primarily are related to learning problems, social problems, behavioural problems or mild mental health problems.

There are many services available to respond to these needs for children and adolescents, e.g. HSE Primary Care Services, HSE Disability Services, Tusla – The Child and Family Agency, Jigsaw, National Educational Psychology Services (NEPS) and local Family Resource Centres.

CAMHS does not accept referrals for children or adolescents where there is no evidence of a moderate to severe mental disorder present. These include:

- Those with an intellectual disability. Their diagnostic and support needs are best met in HSE Social Care/HSE Disability Services. However, those children or adolescents with a mild intellectual disability with moderate to severe mental disorder are appropriate to be seen by CAMHS.
- Those with a moderate to severe intellectual disability and moderate to severe mental disorder. Their needs are best met by CAMHS Mental Health Intellectual Disability (MHID) teams, if present. In the absence of CAMHS MHID teams, multi-disciplinary assessment, intervention and support is provided by the Children's Disability Network Teams in HSE Disability Services.



- Those whose presentation is a developmental disorder. Examples of these could include Dyslexia or Developmental Coordination Disorder. Their needs are best met in HSE Primary Care services and/or Children's Disability Network Teams.
- Those who require assessments or interventions that relate to educational needs. Their needs are best met in services such as Children's Disability Network Teams or the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) or by services such as Tusla's Education Welfare Service provided by Tusla. Those who present with child protection or welfare issues where there is no moderate to severe mental disorder present. Their needs are best met by Tusla – The Child and Family Agency.
- Those who have a diagnosis of Autism. Their needs are best met in services such as HSE Primary Care and/or Children's Disability Network Teams. Where the child or adolescent presents with a moderate to severe mental disorder and autism, it is the role of CAMHS to provide appropriate multi-disciplinary mental health assessment and treatment for the mental disorder. This may involve joint working or shared care with other agencies including HSE Primary Care, Children's Disability Network Teams, and other agencies supporting children and adolescents.

Further detail on the CAMHS Operational Guideline can be found here:

<https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/ncr/camhs-operational-guideline-2019.pdf>

Further details on the National Access Policy can be found here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/progressing-disability/pds-programme/documents/national-policy-on-access-to-services-for-disabilities-and-developmental-delay.pdf>

Should further information be required on this matter, we are happy to support same.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "David Walsh".

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David Walsh  
National Director  
Access and Integration