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Sent: Thursday, May 2, 2024 4:45 PM
To: Lynn Farrell <lfarrell@SDUBLINCOCO.ie>
Subject: HEA-MoSB-00445-2024

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HEA-MoSB-00445-2024

2 May 2024

Your Ref: M11/0324-SDCC

Dear Ms Reilly,

Thank you for your correspondence of 11th April on behalf of South Dublin County Council.

I firmly support the regulation of all mental health services, including community CAMHS, and am progressing priority legislation to underpin this regulation.

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring all mental health services, both inpatient and community, and both adult and child and adolescent, are fully registered, regulated, and inspected by the Mental Health Commission in its role as the independent regulator of mental health services.

Under the Mental Health Act 2001, the Mental Health Commission registers, inspects, and regulates all inpatient mental health services, including inpatient CAMHS. The current Mental Health Act 2001 does not include any provisions for the registration or regulation of community mental health services and therefore, it is not considered that the Act provides the necessary legal basis to expand the Commission's regulatory remit.

The expansion of the Mental Health Commission's role into regulating all community mental health services, including community CAMHS, is being addressed in the forthcoming Government Mental Health Bill. This new Bill is a complex and lengthy piece of legislation. It will provide the necessary legal underpinning to ensure that the Mental Health Commission can regulate all community services. Additionally, the Bill will overhaul the involuntary admission and detention process, modernise provisions related to consent to treatment, provide enhanced safeguards for people accessing inpatient treatment, and provide a new, discrete Part that relates exclusively to the care and treatment of children and young people.

Drafting of this Bill has been prioritised and it is now in its final months of drafting. I will introduce it to the Oireachtas in the current legislative session, which ends in July.

Work also continues to improve CAMHS at service level. Year-on-year funding for mental health services increased by €74 million from €1.221 billion in Budget 2023 to nearly €1.3 billion in 2024, and with a strong focus on investing in child and youth mental health. This is the fourth consecutive year of an increase for mental health

services, and highlights in real terms the importance this Government places on the mental health of those living in Ireland.

CAMHS receives €146.5 million in dedicated funding annually. In addition to this, approximately €110 million in funding is provided by the Government to community-based mental health organisations and NGOs each year to deliver supports and services. A significant proportion of this is dedicated to supporting young people. I recently announced a further €10 million in funding for mental health to support the delivery of National Clinical Programmes and youth mental health, again highlighting the Government's recognition of mental health as a central component to overall health.

For the first time in the history of the State we now have a dedicated National Office for Child and Youth Mental Health in the HSE. This is a very significant development and it will improve leadership, operational oversight, and management of all service delivery and improvements. Both a new HSE National Clinical Lead for Child and Youth Mental Health and a new HSE Assistant National Director for Child and Youth Mental Health have recently taken up post.

There continues to be growing demand for CAMHS across the country with over 22,000 referrals last year. Between 2020 and 2021, referral rates into CAMHS increased by 33%, while the number of new cases seen increased by 21%.

It is a priority for the Government and for the HSE to improve access to CAMHS and to address CAMHS waiting lists. The new dedicated HSE National Office for Child and Youth Mental Health will focus on improved service delivery. This includes taking account of the recent Maskey and Mental Health Commission reports on CAMHS. The National Office is currently finalising the Youth Mental Health Service Improvement Plan which will set out agreed actions for focused service improvement through identified, timely, and measurable actions.

There are now 76 CAMHS teams and 4 in-patient units nationally. Waiting lists for CAMHS continues to fall with nearly 500 fewer children waiting by the end 2023, while 12% more CAMHS appointments were offered to children and young people last year. Staffing in community CAMHS has increased in recent years, with an increase of 500 full time equivalent posts between 2011 and 2024. I secured funding for additional new posts under Budget 2024, with a focus on child and youth mental health roles. The CAMHS staffing complement will also be augmented by further new posts under the additional €10 million funding which I recently announced.

The Government and I remain committed to the development of all aspects of mental health services nationally.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Butler TD
Minister for Mental Health and Older People