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**For Written Answer on :** **01/06/2023**  
**Question Number(s)**: **253** **Question Reference(s): 26841/23**  
**Department:** **Justice**  
**Asked by: Mark Ward T.D.**  
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**QUESTION**

To ask the Minister for Justice how many people are on waiting lists for mental health treatment in Irish prisons in 2022; the average waiting period; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

**REPLY**

The Irish Prison Psychology Service provides an integrated service to people in custody. Specifically, this means the Psychology Service is responsible for both mental health *and* criminogenic (offence related) assessment and interventions.  Irish Prison Service Psychologists are qualified mental health practitioners and the largest body of mental health professionals employed directly by the Irish Prison Service.

The Psychology Service works primarily through a layered care model, providing primary, secondary and tertiary level mental health care to people in custody. A layered care model provides clients with access to a variety of responses, from minimal interventions such as whole population approaches with the Red Cross and primary care mental health interventions, to more specialist mental health and personality disorder treatments.  A layered care model is slightly different to a stepped care model in that it recognises that many people require a variety of interventions at different intensities to meet their needs and enables clinicians and clients to construct their own individual treatment package.

In 2022, 2,259 people were referred to the Irish Prison Service Psychology Service.  At any one time approximately 60%of referrals to the Psychology Service are specifically in relation to the mental health of people in custody.  These referrals include: mood and anxiety disorders,  neurotic and stress related disorders, disorders of personality and behaviour, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) including complex PTSD, self-harm and suicidal behaviour, substance use, eating disorders, psychosis and schizophrenia, addiction, dementias, cognitive decline traumatic brain injuries, impulse disorders, and disorders of sexual preference.  In addition, the Service works with people presenting with intellectual disorders and difficulties, disorders of psychological development, for example, Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD), and behavioural and emotional disorders with onset in childhood e.g. attention deficit (e.g. ADHD, conduct disorders, attachment disorders).

The Prison Service also collaborate with the National Forensic Mental Health Service (NFMHS) to ensure the appropriate provision of psychiatric services to those in custody with a psychiatric diagnosis such as schizophrenia, psychosis and major mood disorder in all closed prisons.  The NFMHS has advised that its caseload is circa 250 patients who are ordinarily in the custody of the Prison Service approximately 5.5% of the total prison population.

A waiting list for the admission of prisoners to the CMH is operated by the NFMHS and is reviewed on a weekly basis. Over the last three years, the number of prisoners on the waiting list has varied between 15-25 patients. It should be noted that all prisoners placed by NFMHS consultants on the waiting list have been clinically assessed as warranting admission to the CMH, which is a tertiary care facility.

The information requested by the Deputy has been provided by the Prison Service and is set out in the table below.

**Psychology Service Waitlist in 2022**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Prison | No. of Unique people on the Waitlist *(as of 31/12/22)* | Average No. of Days on  Waiting    Lists in 2022 |
| **Prison** | **No. of Unique people on the Waitlist *(as of 31/12/22)*** | **Average No. of Days on  Waiting    Lists in 2022** |
| **Arbour Hill** | 115 | 559 |
| **Castlerea** | 158 | 515 |
| **Cloverhill** | 139 | 241 |
| **Cork** | 249 | 229 |
| **Dochas** | 85 | 153 |
| **Limerick** | 170 | 226 |
| **Loughan House** | 35 | 290 |
| **Midlands** | 516 | 645 |
| **Mountjoy** | 314 | 610 |
| **Portlaoise** | 143 | 514 |
| **Shelton Abbey** | 22 | 182 |
| **Training Unit** | 53 | 893 |
| **Wheatfield** | 260 | 432 |
| **Total** | **2259** |  |