

Dear Parent(s),

You may already be aware that the Department of Education established a Scoping Inquiry in relation to revelations of historical child sexual abuse, in day and boarding schools run by religious orders in Ireland, in March 2023.

We have learned that our school has been named in the Report of the Scoping Inquiry, as a place where sexual abuse is alleged to have taken place.

We are deeply saddened by these revelations, but we welcome that these survivors have been given an opportunity to tell their stories and to be heard and supported. We know that you will join us in saying how sad we are that this happened to them.

Although this is a shock, we want to reassure you that these are historical allegations. Schools do everything possible to make sure this never happens again and our school and all schools, now strictly adhere to the Department of Education's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023), in relation to reporting allegations of sexual abuse. These are available online at [Child Protection Procedure for Primary and Post-Primary Schools \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publications-and-resources/publication/child-protection-procedure-for-primary-and-post-primary-schools/). Teachers are also required to do training in Child Protection and the school Board of Management and Department Inspectors monitor our work to ensure we follow these Procedures.

You are likely to hear about this in the media in the coming days and weeks, which may be upsetting for you and/or others in your family. If you are significantly impacted by this, [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](https://www.yourmentalhealth.ie) has information on how to mind your mental health, support others, or to find a service in your area. On the site you can find information on supports provided by HSE-funded organisations, including self-help, counselling, helplines and online supports. You can also call the HSE Your Mental Health Information Line on freephone 1800 111 888 for information on mental health services in your area. The Information Line is open anytime, day or night. You will find further resources below.

We would also ask that if you wish to share any information relating to historical sexual abuse, that you bring it to the attention of TUSLA or the Gardaí for further investigation.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) are available to support our school community at this time. Of course, it may be distressing for our children and young people to hear this information about their school. You may want to protect your child from hearing this news, but they may hear it from other children or through social media. If you want to talk to your child in an age-appropriate way about this, NEPS have provided a script at the end of this letter that may help.

Yours sincerely,

David Barry, Principal



## **Script for Parents to Talk to Children**

*We got a letter from your school today to tell us that your school was named by some adults who went there when they were young, as a place where they were abused.*

*Lots of other schools around the country were also named.*

*I/we shocked and upset by this news.*

*The staff in the school feel the same way.*

*Most importantly we feel sad and upset for the people that this happened to.*

*This happened in the past and should not happen now because schools today have to follow very strict rules and guidelines if there is any suspicion of abuse. The teachers in your school want to make sure all children and young people feel safe when they are at school.*

*This is going to be on the news and on social media in the coming days and weeks.*

*This is good because the survivors of this abuse are getting a chance to tell their stories and to be heard and supported. But hearing about such sad events can be upsetting. Remember if you feel upset talk to me or..... or someone at your school.*

# HSE Supports

In March 2023, a scoping inquiry was established to inform the Government's response to revelations of historical sexual abuse in a number of day and boarding schools run by religious orders. The report of the scoping inquiry was submitted to the Minister for Education 07/06/24 and is now awaiting Government approval to proceed to publication.

People who believe they have experienced sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders, or have been re-traumatised as a result of the inquiry, may seek information in relation to mental health supports.

The range of mental health services delivered by, or on behalf of, the HSE is extensive and covers both specialist and non-specialist (lower level) mental health support.

## **Community-Based and Primary Care Mental Health Supports**

- The HSE [National Counselling Service](#) (NCS) provides a professional, confidential, counselling and psychotherapy service to adults and is available in all HSE Health Regions. NCS was established in 2000 to provide counselling and psychotherapy to adults who experienced childhood abuse. Access to the service can be made by self-referral or referral by a GP.
- People who are referred to the NCS have complex needs arising from the trauma they have experienced and the HSE's counsellor/therapists have specialist expertise in this area. Clients attend for an initial assessment where the client and counsellor talk about how counselling may help. If the NCS is considered to be the most appropriate service counselling will be offered.

## **Person to Person Support**

- [Connect Counselling](#) is a HSE telephone counselling and support service for adults who have experienced childhood abuse. It is staffed by qualified counsellors and is available Wednesday to Sunday from **5 to 9pm. Freephone 1800 477 477**
- [Samaritans](#): Provide confidential non-judgmental support and are available 24 hours a day. [Freephone 116 123](tel:116123) or email [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie)
- [Text About it](#): Provides emotional support to anyone experiencing a crisis, through engagement in a text message 'conversation' with a trained and supervised volunteer. **Text Hello to 50808 to begin.**

## **Self-Help**

- **Minding Your Wellbeing** a series of five online videos available free of charge to the general public at [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie).
- **Stress Control** is an evidence-based stress prevention and management programme, which aims to help people who want to learn effective ways to manage stress or prevent stress becoming a problem. It is suitable for people with severe, moderate or mild symptoms of stress. It is a free six session online class available at [www.stresscontrol.ie](http://www.stresscontrol.ie)

## **Mental Health Information**

- **YourMentalHealth**: Information about mental health and available supports and services can be found on the HSE website [yourmentalhealth.ie](http://yourmentalhealth.ie). Or by calling the **YourMentalHealth Information Line** free of charge on **1800 111 888** (available 24/7)

**Anyone who is unsure about what type of mental health support they need should speak to their GP.**

# Additional Resources

The HSE funds and supports a number of organisations that provide support / clinical interventions at primary care level.

Service Name	Services Offered
<a href="#"><u>Text About it</u></a>	The service provides immediate support for people going through mental health or emotional crisis. Text Hello to 50808 any time day or night
<a href="#"><u>MyMind.org</u></a>	Online and in-person counselling provider <a href="#"><u>MyMind.org</u></a> provides counselling and psychotherapy.
<a href="#"><u>Turn2Me</u></a>	Online counselling provider <a href="#"><u>Turn2Me</u></a> provides counselling and psychotherapy.
<a href="#"><u>Pieta</u></a>	<p>Provide Telephone and text-based support as well as counselling for people who are suicidal or engaging in self-harm.</p> <p>A person can Freephone <a href="#"><u>1800 247 247</u></a> every day 24 hours a day or Text HELP to 51444 - standard message rates apply</p>
<a href="#"><u>Aware</u></a>	Support adults with depression and mood related conditions by offering free evidence-based programmes based on the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) in their local communities

As well as the services provided by and on behalf of the HSE, private mental health supports are also available.

Service Name	Services Offered
<b>The Irish Council for Psychotherapy</b>	<p>Has more than 1,500 psychotherapists registered. It represents a range of disciplines and approaches including Cognitive and Behavioural, Couple and Family, Humanistic and Integrative and Psychoanalytic Therapies.</p> <p><a href="https://www.psychotherapycouncil.ie/find/">https://www.psychotherapycouncil.ie/find/</a></p>
<b>The Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy</b>	<p>The largest Counselling and Psychotherapy Association in Ireland representing over 5,000 members. It provides a link between those who are looking for Counselling/Psychotherapy and those who provide Counselling/Psychotherapy.</p> <p>The IACP provide a free comprehensive online directory of all accredited IACP Counsellors/Psychotherapists in Ireland, see link below. They list accredited Counsellors/Psychotherapists in every county in Ireland</p> <p>The IACP also offer a Telephone Information Service providing information on all areas relating to Counselling and Psychotherapy: 01 230 3536, 9:30 am to 1 pm, Monday to Friday.</p> <p><a href="https://iacp.ie/page/therapists?co=6&amp;cat=11">https://iacp.ie/page/therapists?co=6&amp;cat=11</a></p>
<b>The Psychological Society of Ireland</b>	<p>The professional body for psychology and psychologists in the Republic of Ireland. It represents approximately 4,600 members.</p> <p><a href="https://www.psychologicalsociety.ie/pd/">https://www.psychologicalsociety.ie/pd/</a></p>