



Making **MENTAL** **HEALTH** Matter

STRATEGIC PLAN
2023–2028



Mental
Health
Reform



**Mental
Health
Reform**

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OUR VISION

An Ireland with accessible, effective and inclusive mental health services and supports.

OUR MISSION

To be the unifying voice that leads progressive and wide reform towards human rights-based mental health services and supports in Ireland.

OUR VALUES

Rights-based | Collaborative
| Inclusive | Informed |
Progressive

OUR APPROACH

Accountability & Advocacy |
Coordination &
Policy Development |
Research & Innovation

OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

Mobilisation

Innovation

Accountability

Delivery



CONTENTS

1.	Foreword	3
2.	Glossary	4
3.	Who is Mental Health Reform?	5
	3.1 MHR's Approach	6
	3.2 Development Of The Strategic Plan	8
	3.3 Key Themes	9
4.	MHR's Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028	11
	4.1 Vision, Mission, Values	11
	4.2 Strategic Priorities	12
5.	How we will monitor our success?	18



1. FOREWORD

Mental Health Reform (MHR) is proud to publish 'Making Mental Health Matter - Strategic Plan 2023- 2028'. This ambitious document sets the roadmap for the Coalition's work for the next five years. It aims to equip MHR to adapt to the new post-COVID-19 environment, to identify ambitious yet achievable priorities for the coming years, and to support MHR to continue to grow sustainably in size, reach and influence.

The pandemic started as MHR's 2018-2020 strategic plan was finishing, and so the organisation developed a 2021-2022 interim statement of strategic intent which included among its priorities addressing the impact of the pandemic on the mental health sector. MHR used 2022 to take stock and put in place a robust process with extensive input from our members, individuals with lived experience of mental health difficulties and their supporters, staff, board members and other key stakeholders.

A special thanks to the Community Foundation for Ireland for providing funding to support the consultation and development process.

Over the next five years MHR will continue its efforts in advocating for an accessible, inclusive, high-quality mental health system in Ireland.

Since 2020, partly due to the impact of COVID-19, mental health has become a prominent topic in public discourse both in Ireland and globally.

More and more, there is a cross-society understanding that mental health policy and practice must stretch beyond health and medical concerns to focus on human rights, dignity, and social justice.

The successes achieved by MHR to date are a testament to the power the Coalition has when working together as a strong, collective voice, grounding contributions in high quality evidence, as well as in the wisdom and experience of our member organisations and importantly those with lived experience of mental health difficulties.

We look forward to working with members, those with lived experience and all other organisations and individuals who are passionate about reforming Ireland's mental health system. This document reflects our collective vision and will be achieved together.

Ní heart go cur le chéile,



Michele Kerrigan
Chairperson



Fiona Coyle
CEO



2. GLOSSARY

Mental Health Reform (MHR) advocates for the choice of the individual in how they prefer to describe their experience and acknowledge that it is an individual choice to self-identify with certain expressions or concepts.

The following terminology is used by MHR:

**Mental
Health
Difficulties**

This is MHR's preferred term as it separates language around mental health from the medical model and more fully conveys the full spectrum of mental health and wellbeing that may be experienced by all, throughout our lives.

**Service
Users and
their Family,
Friends,
Carers and
Supporters
(SUFFCS)**

Here we refer to people who have experienced or are experiencing mental health difficulties and who have in the past, or are currently engaging with mental health services and supports. This terminology also captures the important relationship, input and impact of family members, friends, carers and supporters. It is from this broad group of individuals' lived experience that MHR seeks to draw from to contribute to, and inform our work.

**Psycho-
Social
Disability**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which Ireland ratified in 2018, refers to 'psychosocial disabilities' when referring to people with mental health difficulties or people who self-identify with this term. The UNCRPD clearly states that the protections and rights set out extend to those with psychosocial disabilities. Championing the rights of individuals under the UNCRPD is a core aim for MHR and our language reflects this.

**Person
with lived
experience**

By using this term, MHR seeks to recognise the importance of the insight and expertise of a broad group of people who experience or have experienced mental health difficulties.

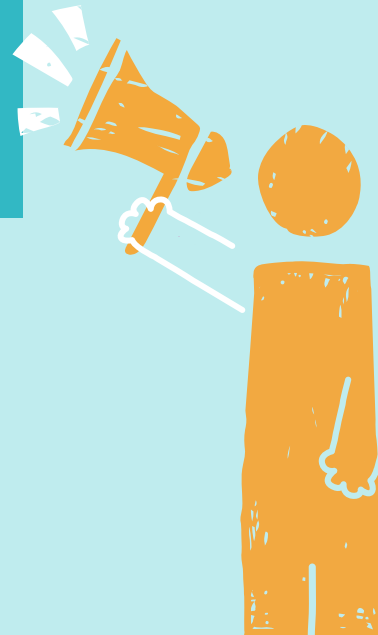
3. WHO IS MENTAL HEALTH REFORM?

The Irish Mental Health Coalition, consisting of Shine, Bodywhys, Grow Mental Health, Irish Advocacy Network and Amnesty International was formed in 2006, with the aim of holding government to account for delivery of the then national mental health policy 'A Vision for Change'.

Mental Health Reform emerged from this coalition and was formally established as a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity in 2011. We have grown to become Ireland's leading national coalition on mental health, advocating for the improvement of mental health policy, services and supports.



.. advocating for the improvement of mental health policy, services and supports ..



3.1 MHR's Approach

APPROACH

The work of MHR is based on the values and experiences of our member organisations, and of those with lived experience of mental health issues. MHR organises its work around:



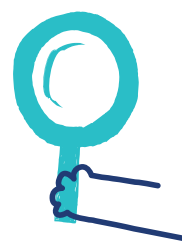
Accountability and Advocacy

MHR mobilises the convening power of the coalition and wider supporter network to influence policy change and public support for a better mental health system. In addition, MHR monitors progress on Government commitments and holds the Government and its agencies to account for delivery.



Coordination and policy development

MHR draws on the expertise and experience, and coordinates the views of member organisations.



Knowledge sharing and innovation

MHR provides a space to connect organisations and people to stimulate the exchange of knowledge and experience in support of better mental health services and supports. MHR promotes the forging of alliances in the pursuit of new innovative approaches and solutions.

.. MHR promotes the forging of alliances in the pursuit of new innovative approaches and solutions ..



MEMBERS

MHR was created by its member organisations as a place for them to come together and collectively provide a unified voice to Government, its agencies, the Oireachtas and the general public on mental health issues. MHR exists for its membership and its work is driven by its member organisations. Since 2011, membership has grown from 19 and at the time of writing this plan, MHR has 81 member organisations.



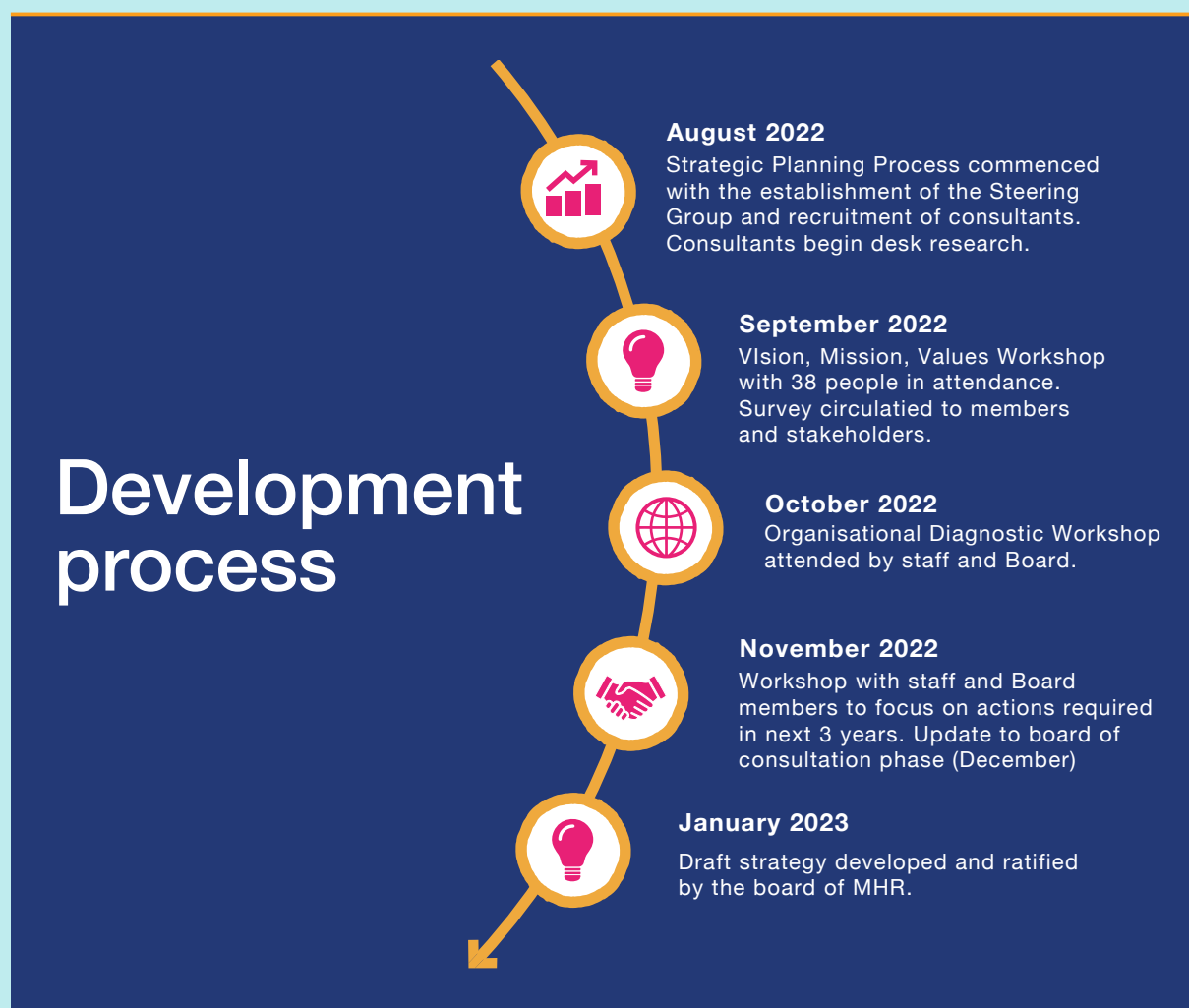
The role that members play in the delivery of mental health services and supports is also evolving. In March 2022, MHR published a report titled “Resetting the Non-Profit Voluntary and Community Mental Health Sector After the Pandemic” which gave an insight to the staggering volumes of services provided by the MHR members:



3.2 Development Of The Strategic Plan

In July 2022, the board of MHR began the process of developing the strategic plan. This strategy development process provided an opportunity to reflect on 11 years of existence, our future ambitions, and set out a map for the key activities of the organisation over the next five years.

The process was driven and overseen by a steering group established by the MHR board. External consultants, 2into3, were also engaged to support the process. As a Coalition it was important that the plan was developed using an in-depth collaborative process.



3.3 Key Themes



As a Coalition, it is crucial that strategic planning is informed and led by the input, insight and opinions of members. The strategic planning process resulted in important insights into member's views of MHR and provided many valuable suggestions on the future role of the Coalition. A number of key themes emerged from the process which have been responded to in the development of the 2023 to 2028 Strategic Pillars.

The collective voice for the sector

The feedback emerging from consultations underlined the importance of MHR's continuing role in providing a unified voice for members to government and other key stakeholders. The diversity of membership and varying capacity within organisations to undertake advocacy work independently means that not only can MHR fill this important role, but can use its position of influence with government and state agencies, acting as a 'funnel' to ensure the voice of the sector is represented across policy, legislation and services. Improving access to services is a key area of focus for our members during this strategy.

Strengthening the coalition

Being the collective voice for our members is contingent on engagement of all members of the Coalition. Maintaining and strengthening member engagement will be foundational for the success of this strategy. To achieve this, MHR will review its approach in this regard and identify measures, such as streamlined and thematic communications, which ensure all members are provided the opportunity to engage with the Coalition in a way that is achievable and beneficial for their organisation.

Growing appetite for collaboration and knowledge sharing

The strength and impact of a Coalition is greatly enhanced by the ethos of collaboration within its membership. It is hugely positive therefore that members indicated an increased appetite for opportunities to work collaboratively, and share expertise and knowledge within the Coalition. MHR is strongly committed to facilitating and identifying opportunities for this within its membership. The diversity of MHR members, not only in area of focus, but in size, is a tremendous asset in this regard, bringing the potential for alternative and new approaches to be shared. It is imperative for the mental health NGO sector that shared learning and knowledge transfer takes place, and that being part of the Coalition is leveraged to ensure no organisation feels they are undertaking their important work in isolation. This theme is interdependent on member engagement and MHR will align its approach in strengthening these areas.

Ensuring a commitment to human rights

The importance of human rights and a rights-based approach to mental health legislation, policy, services and supports was a recurrent theme during discussions at workshops and emerged as one of the key unifying tenants for the Coalition. Respondents acknowledged the key work to date in areas such as reform of the Mental Health Act and they see a central future role for the Coalition in ensuring that Ireland meets its obligations under the UNCRPD and champions a rights-based approach to mental health services. These will continue to be a central element of this strategy.

Value of service user engagement

A shared value that emerged during the consultation process was that the voice, experience and input of services users and their FFSC is integral to ensuring that MHR's work is truly informed, inclusive, and reflective of the lived realities of those accessing mental health services. On-going efforts in this regard, facilitated both through the Coalition members and MHR's own independent Grassroots Forum were acknowledged, as was the importance of continuing to invest in and strengthen this area during the course of the strategic plan.

Implementation of *Sharing the Vision*

Published in 2022, the *Sharing the Vision* Implementation Plan 2022 to 2024, sets out 100 recommendations aimed at enhancing and developing mental health services in Ireland. The implementation plan is not only a 'roadmap' for the mental health sector providing a framework for measurable progress, but also a central tool to ensure government is held to account for promises made. MHR's members strongly conveyed during consultation that monitoring progress and supporting the implementation of recommendations should be a top priority for MHR.

Raising awareness

Over the years, MHR has grown its reputation as a reliable, independent and trusted voice for the sector. While this was strongly recognised during the consultation process, further raising the profile of the Coalition within the public arena and with other external stakeholders would significantly enhance mobilisation and support for our work across campaigning, fundraising, and the development of strategic partnerships.

Innovation

For MHR, innovation is any new approach, initiative or project aimed at improving outcomes and enhancing delivery of, and access to, mental health services and supports. MHR's members are at the centre of MHR's work in Innovation, and Brave New Connections and eMen have been key innovative projects in recent years. The continuation and expansion of MHR's work in the area of Innovation has emerged as an important theme for the coming years.

4. MHR'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 – 2028

4.1 Vision, Mission, Values

Vision	Mission	Values
An Ireland with accessible, effective and inclusive mental health services and supports.	To be the unifying voice that leads progressive and wide reform towards human rights-based mental health services and supports in Ireland.	Rights-based, Collaborative, Inclusive, Informed, Progressive

In practice MHR's values mean:

	Rights-based	MHR will consistently champion best international standards and human rights norms as the benchmark we aspire to and progressively deliver.
	Collaboration	MHR will work as one with members, those with lived experience of mental health difficulties and other stakeholders on our shared goals to achieve our vision.
	Inclusive	MHR will work constructively with all stakeholders with a particular emphasis on the active participation of those with lived experience of mental health difficulties and their family, friends, carers and supporters. MHR will strive, in particular, to listen to and include those voices that have previously not been heard.
	Informed	MHR will root our recommendations in consultation with stakeholders and in international and national evidence of good practice.
	Progressive	MHR will identify and support new approaches across legislation, policy and services that ensure better mental health outcomes for all.

4.2 Strategic Priorities

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1



Mobilise public and political support to address inadequacies in Ireland's mental health system.

Rationale	<i>MHR harnesses the strength of its members and the experiences of SUFFCS to ensure access to high-quality, rights-based mental health services and supports for all</i>		
Related Values	Rights-based; Collaboration; Inclusive		
Goals		Outcomes	
1.1	Strengthen political and public awareness of mental health and human rights.	1.1.1	Enable and facilitate the voice of the Coalition to influence and contribute to key political and public discussion on mental health and human rights.
		1.1.2	Members of the Coalition collectively engage with government stakeholders and decision makers to influence and inform policy development and implementation.
		1.1.3	Spotlight key human rights violations in mental health.
1.2	Build public and political support to ensure resources (financial and human) are in place to deliver high-quality, rights-based mental health services and supports.	1.2.1	Case for investment set out in Pre-Budget Submission which is informed and supported by members and stakeholders.
		1.2.2	Ensure that mental health commitments are delivered.
1.3	Grow and strengthen the participation of SUFFCS in the work of MHR.	1.3.1	The voice and expertise of lived experience is embedded in the work of MHR through the development and enhancement of the Grassroots Forum.
		1.3.2	Co-created initiatives and endeavours are encouraged, facilitated and increased.

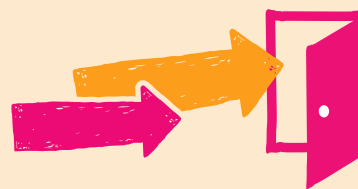


STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Drives evidence-based innovation in mental health to promote better outcomes for service users

Rationale	<i>Through research and partnerships MHR identifies and nurtures promising practices that improve outcomes</i>		
Related Values	Rights-based; Collaboration; Informed; Progressive		
Goals		Outcomes	
2.1	Build strategic alliances with key stakeholders to strengthen and enhance the work of MHR.	2.1.1	Academic, legal and sectoral strategic partnerships are developed, positioning mental health as a national priority and providing opportunity for multi-stakeholder projects and initiatives with the Coalition.
		2.1.2	Opportunities for all-Island and EU partnerships and collaborations that align with and enhance strategic goals are embraced and supported.
2.2	Facilitate and enable knowledge sharing and innovative projects within and between member organisations.	2.2.1	Collaborations within the Coalition and with key sectoral stakeholders are facilitated to develop and inform innovation that supports service delivery improvements and unhindered access to supports.
		2.2.2	Members work together sharing expertise and knowledge. The formation of member alliances is encouraged and supported by MHR.
2.3	Research is identified, initiated and commissioned to produce insightful and impactful research outputs to advance improvement of mental health services and supports throughout Ireland.	2.3.1	Evidence base is developed including policy, legislation, practice, advocacy and service improvement initiatives.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3



Advance policies and practice towards high-quality, rights-based mental health services and supports for all

Rationale	<i>MHR provides a platform for members to collectively influence Government policies, monitor progress on Government commitments and hold the Government and its agencies to account for delivery.</i>		
Related Values	Rights-based; Advocacy; Informed; Progressive		
Goals		Outcomes	
3.1	Reform of the Mental Health Act.	3.1.1	The reform of the Mental Health Act has progressed and Ireland is leading on the enactment of human rights compliant mental health legislation.
3.2	Hold the Government to account to honour its obligations under EU and UN commitments.	3.1.2	The rights of people with psychosocial disabilities, under Ireland's UNCRPD obligations are met and embedded throughout law, policy and services.
		3.1.3	The work of the Children's Mental Health Coalition ensures that mental health is intrinsic throughout law, policy and services as Ireland meets with its obligations under the UNCRC.
3.3	Mental Health Reform is an interface for the unified voice of our members to government, the public and key stakeholders.	3.3.1	MHR represents the Coalition in key policy and mental health service developments and implementation spaces.
3.4	Hold Government and Departments to account for the implementation and development of national policies impacting mental health services and supports.	3.4.1	In line with <i>Sharing the Vision</i> , mental health is adopted as a whole of government priority issue and embedded across all relevant department policy and initiatives through representation and amplifying the voice of lived experience.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4



MHR strives to be a high functioning and well-resourced organisation

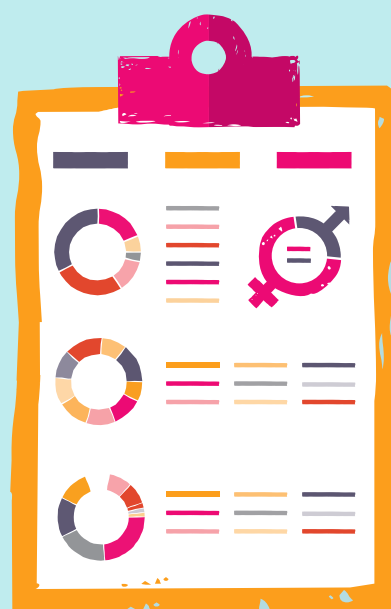
Rationale	<i>An optimal organisation design will ensure our agreed strategy will be effectively implemented through the right people, process, systems, governance and culture</i>		
Related Values	Rights-based; Collaboration; Advocacy; Inclusive; Informed; Progressive		
Goals		Outcomes	
4.1	Enhance the ethos of collective endeavour and cooperation within the coalition.	4.1.1	Strengthen Membership engagement.
		4.1.2	Strengthen awareness of the work of MHR among all members.
4.2	Implement a sustainable funding model.	4.2.1	Maintain and develop core funding sources that increase capacity to achieve and deliver our strategic goals.
		4.2.2	Grow and diversify unrestricted funding streams.
4.3	Implement an organisational structure and approach that supports the delivery of this strategy.	4.3.1	Enhance a values led, positive working environment.
		4.3.2	Provide access to opportunities for training and professional development programmes for staff.
4.4	Impeccable Governance, financial and operational management and oversight in line with the organisational obligations as a registered charity.	4.4.1	Adhere and comply with the Governance Code to ensure the highest standard of legal and sectoral regulation.

5. HOW WE WILL MONITOR OUR SUCCESS?

The Strategic Priorities reflect the ambitions and aspirations of MHR, and will guide the work of the organisation over the coming five years. To ensure full and successful implementation of this plan a detailed monitoring framework will be developed. The Board of Directors will regularly monitor this framework to oversee and evaluate progress, ensuring the success of the Coalition's cumulative endeavour towards achieving its goals.

Finally, MHR commits to continuously seeking input and feedback from members, service users and their FFCS and other key stakeholders to help us learn from our activities and drive us to ever higher standards of performance.

.. The Strategic Priorities reflect the ambitions and aspirations of MHR ..





Making **MENTAL HEALTH** Matter

STRATEGIC PLAN
2023–2028

The Scheme to Support National Organisations is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural and Community Development.



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