



Mental Health Reform

Promoting Improved Mental Health Services

An Taoiseach,
Mr Leo Varadkar, TD
Government Buildings
Merrion St Upper
Dublin 2

2 October 2023

Dear Taoiseach,

As members of Mental Health Reform, we call on the Irish Government to prioritise funding for the voluntary and community mental health sector in the upcoming budget.

We welcome your commitment this month to examine measures to support early intervention in Budget 2024. The voluntary and community mental health sector stands as a steadfast and invaluable partner in the provision of these crucial services.

Throughout communities across Ireland, organisations in the sector play an indispensable role in the delivery of prevention and early intervention services including education, talk therapies, helplines and peer support. Investment in these services is key to preventing the development of complex and costly mental health difficulties and reducing the need for specialist care.

We note that recruitment and retention difficulties are placing enormous pressure on the public mental health system including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Long waiting lists and a lack of therapeutic supports have severely impacted children and young people with mental health difficulties. While these challenges are significant, voluntary and community organisations are available to provide effective solutions. The sector is ideally situated to assist in the expansion of mental health services in the community, ensuring access to support at the earliest point possible.

Since the pandemic, the demand for mental health support has risen exponentially yet there has been little to no sustainable funding increase for the sector in recent years. The current funding model is piecemeal in approach, inadequate and unsustainable. The lack of multi-annual funding impacts our ability to recruit and retain staff and hampers the development of vital services that are needed now.

The contribution of the voluntary and community mental health sector lies at the heart of our national mental health policy, *Sharing the Vision*. With an injection of increased funding, the sector has the potential to significantly bolster access to mental health services, ensuring that individuals get the right support at the right time. Mental Health Reform recommends an investment of an additional €115M for mental health in Budget 2024. This includes an additional €25M for voluntary and community providers to meet the ever-growing demand for support.

It is evident that mental health must be a core focus for the whole of Government in Budget 2024. By supporting voluntary and community groups, we can collectively create a more inclusive, compassionate, and effective mental health system. As members of Mental Health Reform, we are confident that with your leadership and support, we can overcome the challenges ahead and enhance mental health outcomes for the people of Ireland.

Yours sincerely,

1. Fiona Coyle, CEO, Mental Health Reform
2. Áine Lawlor, Chair, Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists
3. Andy Heffernan, CEO, Alzheimer Association of Ireland
4. Angie O'Brien, Chair, Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists
5. Annabel O'Keeffe, Interim CEO, Grow Mental Health
6. Barry McGinn, CEO, Rehab group
7. Bernie Keogh, Managing Director, A Lust for Life
8. Berni Smyth, CEO, Kerry Diocesan Youth Service
9. Brendan McCarthy, CEO, Cork Mental Health Foundation
10. Catherine Kenny, CEO, Dublin Simon Community
11. Chris Clifford, President, Uachtarán, Union of Students in Ireland
12. Colette Nolan, CEO, Peer Advocacy in Mental Health
13. Dara Ryder, CEO, AHEAD
14. Fiona O'Malley, CEO, Turn2Me
15. Fiona Tuomey, CEO, HUGG
16. Helen Ryle, Chairperson, European Association of Professional Hypnotherapists
17. Hugh Morley, Head of Business, Cork Counselling Services
18. Ian Power, CEO, Spunout
19. Jacinta Hastings, CEO, Bodywhys
20. Jess Angland, CEO, Slí Eile
21. Joan Wall, Interim CEO, Suicide or Survive
22. John Church, CEO, Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
23. John Dolan, CEO, Disability Federation Ireland
24. John Lannon, CEO, Doras
25. Dr Joseph Duffy, CEO, Jigsaw
26. Ken Kilbride, CEO, ADHD Ireland
27. Kevin Burn, CEO, Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service
28. Krystian Fikert, CEO, MyMind
29. Lisa Molloy, CEO, Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
30. Lochlann Scott, CEO, Helplink Mental Health
31. Dr. Marie Ó Mír, CEO, Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists
32. Martin Collins, Co-Director, Pavee Point
33. Martin Rogan, CEO, Mental Health Ireland
34. Martina Smith, CEO, Housing Association for Integrated Living
35. Mary Mc Hugh, CEO and Founder, Irish Online Counselling and Psychotherapy Service
36. Moninne Griffith, CEO, BeLonG To
37. Nicola Byrne, CEO, Shine
38. Noel Smyth, Chairman, 3Ts
39. Odhrán Allen, CEO, Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland
40. Orla O'Connor, Director, National Womens' Council of Ireland
41. Pat Dennigan, CEO, Focus Ireland
42. Paul Gilligan, CEO, St. Patrick's Mental Health Services
43. Ray Cullen, CEO, Talk to Tom

44. Rea Walshe, Interim Chair, Irish Council for Psychotherapy
45. Rosie Bissett, CEO, Dyslexia Association of Ireland
46. Róisín Clarke, CEO, Irish Foster Care Association
47. Salome Mbugua, CEO, AkiDwa
48. Saoirse Brady, Executive Director, Irish Penal Reform Trust
49. Sarah Jane Hennelly, CEO, Association for Agency-Based Counselling & Psychotherapy in Ireland
50. Sarah O'Toole, Executive Director, Samaritans Ireland
51. Seán Moynihan, CEO, ALONE
52. Sharon Lane, CEO, Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland
53. Dr Sheila Gilheany, CEO, Alcohol Action Ireland
54. Sheena Horgan, CEO, The Psychological Society of Ireland
55. Stephanie Manahan, CEO, Pieta
56. Suzanne Connolly, CEO, Barnardos
57. Tanya Ward, CEO, Children's Rights Alliance
58. Thomas Lillis, Chairperson, Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland
59. Thomas McCann, Director, Traveller Counselling Service
60. Tonya Myles, General Manager, Cairde
61. Dr Tracey A Monson, CEO, Daughters of Charity Child and Family Services
62. Vivian Geiran, Chair, Irish Association of Social Workers