

Mental Health matters to voters

Ireland has high rates of mental health difficulties and challenges accessing services.

Over 40% of people in Ireland experience mental health difficulties according to a recent [Irish study](#). A 2023 European Union [Report](#) showed that Ireland has the highest difficulty in accessing mental health services in Europe.

[Research](#) from 2022 has indicated that Ireland's prevalence rates of mental health difficulties are relatively high in comparison to international estimates and according to the [Mental State of the World Report 2023](#), Ireland has one of the lowest mental health scores in the world.

Many people with mental health difficulties, particularly children and families, are unable to access appropriate or timely intervention due to funding shortfalls. Low levels of investment are leading to ongoing delays in the development of new services, geographical disparities in the availability of treatment, and unacceptable waiting lists.

1 in 2 people will experience some sort of mental health difficulty in their lifetime either directly or indirectly through family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

That's up to 50% of voters!



GET INVOLVED

- * Contact your candidates and ask them how they plan to make mental health a priority
- * Vote for better mental health services in the upcoming elections
- * Hold a coffee morning, town hall, hustings on what better mental health services would look like in your area. Contact info@mentalhealthreform.ie for more info.
- * Like and share our posts on social media and tag your local candidates

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KEY PRIORITIES

Mental Health Reform's General Election 2024 Manifesto, calls on candidates to pledge, if elected, to prioritise and implement essential improvements in our mental health services.

Prioritise



- * Create a Super Junior Ministry for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- * Create a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Mental Health and Wellbeing
- * Instate a HSE National Lead for Mental Health and Regional Mental Health Leads

Invest



- * Allocate 10% of the overall health budget to mental health by 2030
- * Resource the implementation plan of our national mental health policy, *Sharing the Vision*
- * Resource and fully implement the Wellbeing Framework in the Department of the Taoiseach

Legislate



- * Progress reform of the Mental Health Act, 2001
- * Commence the Mental Health Bill 2024 and make the new law operational

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

Community
Foundation
Ireland

General Election Manifesto Priorities

Mental Health Matters

- * Show your voters that Mental Health Matters in the upcoming GE.
- * Show your candidates that Mental Health Matters to voters.

Mental Health Matters Checklist: ✓

- Invest 10% in Mental Health
- Reform Mental Health Act
- Super Junior Ministry
- Joint Oireachtas Committee
- HSE National Lead
- Resource Sharing the Vision

- ✓ Prioritise
- ✓ Invest
- ✓ Legislate



PRIORITISE



Effective leadership is essential for driving positive change in the mental health system

- ★ **Government:** Develop a Super Junior Minister role for Mental Health in the Government and create a full Joint Oireachtas Committee on Mental Health & Wellbeing
- ★ **HSE:** Instate a National Lead for Mental Health, reporting directly to the CEO of the HSE and Instate a Regional Mental Health Lead in the six HSE Health Regions
- ★ **Wellbeing:** Resource and fully implement the Wellbeing Framework in the Department of the Taoiseach, including budget tagging

The post of National Director of Mental Health in the Health Service Executive (HSE) was disbanded in 2016. Since then, Mental Health Reform has joined others in calling for the reinstatement of that high-level, strategic, accountable role in the HSE. With the restructure from 9 Community Health Organisations to 6 HSE Health Regions and a HSE HQ, Mental Health Reform is again urging the HSE and Government to recognise the need for strategic leadership in mental health and wellbeing for the country. If we want to put mental health on a parity with physical health, then we need to ensure that a National Director is at the decision-making tables and bringing the voice of mental health to the fore.

We welcome plans to create a 'Regional Disability Lead' for the Regional Health Areas¹. Mental Health Reform would advocate that given the significant mental health needs in Ireland, as well as the fact that Ireland has the highest difficulty in accessing mental health services in Europe², that a 'Regional Mental Health Lead' is also of vital importance in the Regional Health Areas.

Strengthen leadership and accountability in mental health



INVEST



Increase investment in mental health

Mental health funding is an investment not a cost. Since the pandemic, Ireland's investment in mental health has stagnated at between 5 and 6% of the health budget. (6% in 2020, 5.4% in 2021, 5.5% in 2022, 5.1% in 2023, 5.6% in 2024).

The Government's own commitment was to allocate 10% of the health budget to mental health under Sláintecare. The next Government has the opportunity to move forward with this important investment and to make Ireland a world leader in mental health prevention, care and provision of services.

- ★ **10%:** Increase investment in mental health to 10% of the total health budget by 2030
- ★ **VCS:** Provide sustainable multi-annual funding for the voluntary and community mental health sector
- ★ **Sharing the Vision:** Provide costings for the remaining *Sharing the Vision* Implementation Plans and ensure that each budget contains the necessary new development funding to continue improvement of our mental health services and supports
- ★ **Infrastructure:** Provide capital investment for mental health services to improve buildings and facilities

Address the chronic underfunding of mental health services



LEGISLATE



Ireland's mental health laws are outdated

The Mental Health Act, 2001 is significantly out of step with international human rights standards including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD). There is an urgent need to reform the Mental Health Act, 2001 to protect the rights of people receiving mental health care in acute mental health centres.

The 2001 legislation does not adequately protect the rights of people who are admitted to acute mental health centres for mental health treatment. Our research shows that many people using mental health services do not feel that they are being treated with dignity or respect. They say they do not have enough choice or control over their mental health treatment. Without urgent reform, people with mental health difficulties will continue to be impacted by inappropriate and outdated practices.

The Mental Health Bill 2024 is expected to bring about the largest overhaul of the State's mental health laws in decades. We are urging the Government to progress the Mental Health Bill 2024 immediately to ensure that all necessary improvements are made and that it is signed into law at the earliest possible juncture. We call on the new Government to commit to its timely progression and enactment.

If the Government wants a modern and effective health system, we need to ensure a rights-based approach to mental health care. People want to be reassured that their rights will be protected when in an acute mental health centre so that they can confidently seek support.

Reform the Mental Health Act, 2001



1 https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/07.06.24_Updated_slide_for_Angela_Ryan_-_HSE_EMT_Model_-_Advanced_Design.pdf
2 European Union Eurobarometer Report from October 2023: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3032>