

Programme for Government Submission - *Mental Health*



This submission aims to convey the top priorities for mental health for inclusion in the Programme for Government that have been expressed by Mental Health Reform's membership, representing **86 organisations across the Voluntary and Community Sector**.

While it has been welcome to see the additional funding that has been allocated to mental health, and the ongoing implementation of Sharing the Vision, the national mental health strategy, under former Minister of State for Mental Health, Mary Butler TD, many people with mental health difficulties, including children and families, continue to struggle to access appropriate or timely intervention leading to ongoing delays in the development of new services, geographical disparities in the availability of treatment, and long waiting lists for particular services.

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.

Now is the time to **Prioritise, Invest and Legislate** in mental health. We need you to:

- **Prioritise** the policy related priorities that are identified in this submission
- **Invest** in mental health services to address the chronic underfunding
- **Legislate** to reform the Mental Health Act, 2001

One of the key proposals in this submission is for consideration of an innovative **€15m funding programme to support children and young people with mental health difficulties through services provided by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)**. This additional funding should be viewed as an investment and not simply an additional cost to government. This new proposal seeks to build on the vital work of those organisations already providing such services and supports.

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PRORITISE



Government:

- Recognise that mental health is a **cross-departmental issue** that requires funding and prioritisation by all departments.
- Develop a **Super Junior Minister** role for **Mental Health** in the Government or a full Ministry on Disability and Mental Health.
- Create a full **Joint Oireachtas Committee on Mental Health & Wellbeing**.
- Develop a new **cross-border initiative** on mental health.
- Integrate mental health considerations into the next **national climate action plan**.

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.
- Improve **data collection** on mental health prevalence and community mental health services.
- Urgently progress **electronic health records** including for those experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Implement an **integrated financial management system** within the HSE and **budgetary tagging** of all mental health related spending in Government through the Wellbeing Framework in the Department of the Taoiseach.
- Listen to and involve people with **lived experience** of mental health difficulties in the decision making processes around mental health service provision across all services, including for example, youth mental health and ethnic minority voices.

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INVEST



10%: Increase investment in mental health to 10% of the total health budget by 2030.

Mental Health Bill 2024: Adequate funding must be allocated for the introduction of the Mental Health Bill 2024.

Voluntary & Community Sector:

- Provide adequate and sustainable **multi-annual funding** for the voluntary and community mental health sector.
- Ensure **fair and streamlined contracts** for those VCS bodies receiving Section 38 and Section 39 funding.
- Implement the **8% claim** in the WRC.
- **Eradicate the postcode lottery** by reviewing gaps in funding for high quality voluntary sector services. If an organisation provides excellent services for a significant portion of the country, investment should be made in ensuring rollout.

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, with a particular emphasis on recovery orientated supports.
 - **NCPs:**
 - Progress the rollout of the National Clinical Programmes (NCPs) in Mental Health including the establishment of a Mother and Baby Unit.
 - Progress the extension of dual diagnosis services to incorporate alcohol and mental health, ensuring all services are trauma responsive.
 - **Priority Groups:**
 - **Intercultural Competency:** Invest in cultural competency training for all mental health service providers, a national **Traveller Mental Health Strategy** and an ethnic identifier in all mental health services.
 - **LGBT+:** Ensure mental health services are inclusive of, and responsive to, the needs of LGBTI+ community, particularly in relation to healthcare for Transgender people in Ireland.
 - **Autism:** Deliver access to therapeutic support for Autistic children with educational support needs within the school environment. Create a pathway for Autistic adults to access an Assessment of Needs, as well as follow up multidisciplinary support including mental health services.

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INVEST



Youth Mental Health:

- A new **€15m funding programme** for early intervention in youth and adolescent mental health.
- A commitment to approve the use of state-aided school funding to **avail of the services of psychotherapists** in private practice according to each school's unique context, culture and environment.

Mental Health in Older Persons:

- Increased mental health supports to help **identify and respond to age-related mental health challenges**.
- The development of a **loneliness strategy** to sit within the office of An Taoiseach as outlined in the last Programme for Government.
- A review of older people with enduring mental health difficulties being moved from public wards to live in private facilities under **Fair Deal**. While this can provide for good physical care, staff in these facilities often have less time to talk and listen, and the person also incurs a financial loss.

Suicide and self-harm prevention:

- Increase investment in suicide and self-harm prevention.

Mental Health Research Strategy:

- Provide at least €1m per annum for the new Mental Health Research Strategy.

Innovation:

- Funding for innovation and use of new technologies in mental health interventions.

LEGISLATE



Reform the Mental Health Act, 2001:

- 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 and to regulate community mental health services. The Mental Health Bill 2024 needs to be progressed, enacted and commenced as a matter of urgency recommencing at Committee Stage.

For more information on any of the above content please contact Suzanna Weedle, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at sweedlementalhealthreform.ie or at **0860245409**

Further information on MHR is available at www.mentalhealthreform.ie