

Press Statement: 9th October 2015

Budget Submission 2016

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland expresses dismay over the continued slow pace of the delivery of the national mental health policy 'A Vision for Change'.

Mental illness causes both social and financial damage. The cost to the nation of poor mental health (leaving aside the human costs to individuals and society) is over 2% of GNP.

As a percentage of overall health spend, the budget for mental health has reduced from **13% in the 1980s to 6.2% in 2015**. This is still scandalously low compared to other countries (UK 12%, Canada and New Zealand 11%). **This is a human rights issue and should be seen as such by anyone who cares about the health of our nation.** The recommendation from A Vision for Change was to gradually build up to 8.24% of the health budget but the time frame foreseen for this is past.

The College has compiled a list of key points for consideration by Government which include the following:

The provision of **community based mental health teams** for patients of all ages on a 24/7 basis nationally must be a priority if inroads are to be made into the continued morbidity and mortality due to suicide, self-harm, chronic mental illness and alcohol and substance abuse

- All services should be funded on a **Recovery model** and the provision of **rehabilitation specialists and multi-disciplinary supports** assured in all areas of the country
- Budget actions (both Taxation and Spending) must support activities that **reduce marginalisation and substance abuse**, two of the main contributors to psychiatric morbidity and self-harm and suicide.
- **School based and community based counselling and psychological services for children and adolescents** must be revitalised.
- The **recruitment and retention of trained staff** must be prioritised and, in the context of Psychiatry, the implementation of the **MacCraith Report** and the provision of attractive working conditions for Trainee and Consultant Psychiatrists

(i.e. the provision of appropriately staffed teams and systems) need to be urgently addressed.

- The European response to the current refugee crisis will mean responsibilities for Ireland. **Planning for healthcare**, including mental healthcare, must be in place to ensure the special needs of displaced people are met appropriately.

Dr John Hillery, Director of Communications and Public Education has spoken on behalf of the College saying;

‘The annual Budget is an opportunity for the Government to propose a pathway to underpin mental health by investment of money and by policies that support the mental health of vulnerable individuals through investment in social policies and taxation that promotes community inclusion and discourages unhealthy activities.

‘The coming budget is an opportunity for the Government to mark its intentions to dedicate a substantial amount of money to the Mental Health Budget along with plans for governance and accountability that will promote development of mental health services to support people with mental health problems in their recovery in the short, medium and long term.’

Ends

Note to the Editor

Dr John Hillery is available for interview on request. A full copy of the Budget Submission 2016, is available on the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland website at (insert url)

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