



Press Statement: 24 October 2013

College of Psychiatrists of Ireland express concerns over further cuts to Budget for Mental Health

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland has ongoing concerns about funding for mental health services, and points out the unequal treatment for those with mental illness compared with those with physical illness.

The programme for government had agreed that €35m per annum would be ring fenced for mental health, and in particular for the development of community mental health teams. However in Budget 2014, only €20m has been ring fenced for these community developments. Alongside this there has been an overall reduction in funding of mental health services.

The overall funding for mental health services has dropped from €937 million in 2006 to €733 million in 2013.

- As a percentage of overall health spend, the budget for mental health has reduced from 13% in the 1980s to 5.2% in 2013, much lower than recommended for a developed country.
- The actual spend on mental health services has reduced considerably since 2006, the year *A Vision for Change* was published as the accepted blueprint.
- The recommendation from *A Vision for Change* was to gradually build up to 8.24% of the health budget. In the UK, mental health is 12% of the health budget.

“We know that the integration of developments in psychological and neurobiological treatments have the potential to greatly improve outcomes in mental health, and the provision of these services require well staffed community mental health teams.” stated Dr. Anne Jeffers, Director, External Affairs and Policy. *“The fact that mental health budget has been disproportionately reduced compared with other health budgets is concerning, and contributes to the stigma associated with mental health”* she added.

In their pre budget submission, the College outlines the difficulties resulting from the lack of developments as recommended under *A Vision for Change*. There is a lack of development of community services, lack of development of specialist services and resulting increased burden on families and individuals with mental health problems. The long term effects of reduced spending on mental health care will result in a greater economic burden on society in the long term, the submission warns. International evidence shows that suicide rates increase during a recession and tragically we have already seen this occurring in Ireland already.

“We are aware that these reductions have occurred despite the best efforts of Minister for Mental Health, Kathleen Lynch” explained College President Dr. Anthony McCarthy, *“but we now call on the Department of Health and the HSE to ensure mental illness gets the percentage of the health budget the A Vision for Change has recommended. How we treat the most vulnerable in our society is a measure of what kind of society we are, and when people are unwell they may not be in a position to advocate for their needs, and those entrusted with responsibility have a duty of care to ensure their voice is heard.”*



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Attached: CPsychI Pre Budget Submission.

Ends

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