

Press Statement 10 October 2020

‘Mental Health for All. Greater Investment – Greater Access. Everyone, everywhere’

Theme for World Mental Health Day 2020 (10th October)

The College of Psychiatrists continues to be concerned for those requiring access to mental health support and services particularly since Covid 19 hit. On World Mental Health day 2020 the College calls on the government to finally show their commitment financially to mental health service delivery and development in the upcoming 2021 Budget.

A vast array of valuable activities and events now take place every year in the run up to, and on, World Mental Health Day. They aim to reduce stigma around mental illness and difficulties and to raise awareness of the value those with mental distress and illness have in our society. However, year on year for the past 12 years, a few days later, disappointment and exasperation ensue with the announcement of the Budget. Mental health funding has remained static and inadequate for too many consecutive budgets despite successive government intentions to prioritise it.

Many recent surveys, including a College survey, have indicated the negative consequence Covid has had and continues to have on mental health. Now more than ever it is vital to invest adequately in mental distress and illness.

With the imminent announcement of the budget for 2021 the College hopes that this Budget will finally break the chain of underinvestment and show commitment and real concern for the mental health of the nation and for those vulnerable in society due to mental distress and chronic enduring mental illness. It is the only way to ensure mental health for all, with equity of access for everyone, everywhere.

The College of Psychiatrists [pre 2021 budget submission](#) once again points out that for more than ten consecutive years the percentage of the Health Budget for Mental Health and delivering on national policy has been scandalously low at 5 to 6 percent. As per numerous official documentation and investment in similar jurisdictions it needs to move to 12 percent of the budget which amounts to the current one billion euro mental health budget being doubled to two billion euro.

Commenting on World Mental Health Day ahead of the upcoming Budget 2021 announcement, Dr William Flannery, College President said,

‘There has been much rhetoric and narrative around mental health, and particularly now on the consequences of Covid 19 on the nation’s mental health, but so far, not the funding to match. The Winter Plan, as we have seen reported omitted, an allocation for mental health and illness.

While the myriad of issues is well known, there are many more solutions possible and well documented. But they need financial backing. We have 'A Vision for Change' and now 'Sharing the Vision' policies but no real commitment to the financial investment required to achieve the recommendations and development in both.

It is very difficult for us as doctors who, along with our allied mental health professionals, know we can provide supports, interventions and treatments that work and can bring recovery and value to the lives of people with mental illness and distress, ultimately enabling them to be active citizens in all facets of society. But services continue to be chronically underfunded. It is very frustrating and demoralising but more particularly for those who use and need the services.'

The focus of the World Mental Health Federation on investment and access as the WMHD theme this year and adopted by WHO, reflects the lack of political will, understanding and belief that investment in mental health services benefits a country economically as well as improves and maintains the well being of its citizens.

Ends

Notes for the Editor:

[See Pre Budget 2021 submission here](#)

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is the professional body for psychiatrists in the Republic of Ireland. The Mission of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is to promote excellence in the practice of psychiatry. It is the sole body recognised by the Medical Council and the HSE for the training of doctors to become specialists in psychiatry and for the continuing assurance of the career long competence of specialists in psychiatry. The College supports the delivery of mental health services in line with the recovery model.