



2023 Budget Submission

Mental Health Services need an *urgent* focus and radical overhaul, *particularly* post-Covid. Sticking plaster changes, or improvements and implementation plans that will take up to 10 years to put in place are not sufficient. Funding, resourcing, recruitment and retention, ICT systems, governance and accountability are worse than they have ever been, particularly since the world-class 'A Vision for Change' 2006 was accepted by all and internationally lauded.

There is no health without mental health.

EAP Department September 2022

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is the professional and training body for psychiatrists in the Republic of Ireland. The Mission of the College is to promote excellence in the practice of psychiatry and advocate for supports and services for those with mental illness.

Mental Health Services for those with debilitating severe, chronic illness need urgent attention and accelerated, increased investment and funding. A radical overhaul and crisis-level action for implementation of agreed, evidenced policies matched with appropriate, necessary funding and resourcing, are required to save, mind and value the mental health of our population, our most valuable resource.

This must come with clear responsibility, accountability, and measurement of relevant outcomes for those who use the services, to ensure the public purse is being spent appropriately and efficiently.

National, European and International data indicates that post the Covid-19 pandemic alarming levels of anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions across the ages exist particularly, but not exclusively, among young people.

A multitude of supports, treatments and care services at multi-levels are not just needed but urgently required. Primary care services, community care, secondary and tertiary care services and, in parallel, disability and other specialist programmes and supports, need planning and implementation in order to achieve person-centred, modern, and fit-for-purpose Health Services for the most vulnerable in our country.

Existing services continue to see increased severity of referrals, emergency presentations and greater numbers of patients with serious mental illness experiencing relapse. This is in the context of an already grossly inadequate budget for mental health services and makes the provision of a modern, fit for purpose, equitable service for all, unattainable. The goal of achieving parity of esteem for mental illness with physical illness is a long way from being realised.

Our healthcare professionals, tasked with supporting and caring for our most vulnerable, are themselves tired, stretched, anxious, worried about risks to patients, morally compromised, and professionally drained and disillusioned.

If the mental health and wellbeing of the nation is truly to be a priority going forward, particularly in the wake of Covid-19, the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland proposes the following immediate key actions:

- ***Who is estimating and measuring?*** Budget 2023 must allow a doubling of funding, to over €2 billion, to indicate full and meaningful resourcing of mental health services, including the National Clinical Programmes in Mental Health. This must encompass clear allocation, accountability, and measurability to ensure value for money and, importantly, positive individual recovery outcomes. Sláintecare, A Vision for Change, the WHO, and budgets in other similar jurisdictions all indicate that, the budget for the Irish Mental Health Services should, at a minimum, be 10 % of the overall Health Budget.
- ***Workforce capacity and planning:*** Issues around recruitment and retention of psychiatrists, with a dual campaign for both, must be urgently addressed. This includes an overhaul of the national recruitment process, provision of a fully-funded training programme and use of evidenced-based documents that outline issues for psychiatry and how to address the workforce planning numbers.
- ***A system that follows the patient:*** Quality of care and safety for all must underpin any system. The funding, resourcing and implementation of a mental health ICT system with a ‘unique identifier patient record’ at its core is now urgent. Advanced technological capabilities, such as digital national standard referral forms between primary, secondary and tertiary services, that capture patient data and improve efficiency, remain conspicuously absent.
- ***Population growth, aftermath and crumbling buildings:*** Additional mental health funding is also required in order to address the specific consequences of Covid-19, as well as population growth in the young and older age groups. Increasingly neglected and inappropriate, unfit for purpose buildings in which services operate to support those with mental illness need to be redeveloped and modernised.
- ***Who is in charge?*** The government must re-establish the role of Mental Health Director/Lead and the Mental Health Division as a matter of urgency, to include a Mental Health Lead for Children.

Caring for our nation’s mental health means ensuring there are supports and services for those with major mental illness and disorder, which will exist, no matter how comprehensive early intervention and mental health promotion are.

Please see previous years pre-budget submissions for outline and more detail, all of which is still relevant for 2023.

CPsychI pre-budget submissions: All years - [see documents here](#)