



2024 Budget Submission

There is no health without mental health.

There is no mental health service without
without financial health.

There is no fully functioning mental health
service without the mental health of
medical professionals and their
multidisciplinary colleagues.

Doctor burnout is having a hugely negative
impact on patient care. Radical plans for
doctor recruitment and retention in mental
health services are urgently needed in
conjunction with a doubling of the current
budget from 1 billion to 2 billion Euro.

#ItsAboutPeople

EAP Department September 2023

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 across the lifespan of our population need crisis-level action and urgent, immediate attention. Patients, and potential patients, with chronic, severe, debilitating illness need and deserve nationwide, accessible, fully-functioning, outcomes-oriented services to support them recovering and leading active, quality, contributory and fulfilling lives.

Mental health services in Ireland have been hollowed out over the course of decades now through ever reducing and scandalously low budgets and lack of real and intentional implementation of accepted national health policies and plans. The concerning and shameful result is a system with far too few psychiatrists treating an ever-increasing cohort of patients with mental illness. Doctors working in the services are hugely over-worked and chronically under-resourced.

Our medical and healthcare professionals, tasked with treating and caring for our most vulnerable and ill, are themselves mentally burnt out and are experiencing occupational stress. They are tired, stretched, lacking in motivation, anxious, worried about risks to their patients, morally compromised, and professionally drained and disillusioned.

Patients simply cannot expect to receive the very best care if the doctors who treat and support them cannot cope with the demands that are being placed on them.

Accelerated, increased investment and national implementation of agreed, evidenced recruitment and retention plans and policies matched with appropriate, necessary funding and resourcing of the mental health services 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.

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.

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

1. Double funding amount and percentage of Health Budget:

The percentage of the Health Budget allocated to mental health has experience a severe decline over almost three decades (since 1984) as the population and mental health needs of the nation have dramatically increased:

Year	Percentage of Health Budget
1884	13%
1994	10%
2004	7%
2014	6%
2023	5%
2024	?

Will it remain 5% in 2024?

Budget 2024 must include a doubling of funding, to €2 billion, to indicate full and meaningful resourcing of mental health services. This must encompass clear allocation, accountability, and measurability to ensure value for money and, importantly, positive individual recovery outcomes. Sláintecare and international policies, such as 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, not the scandalously low 5%. The much-focussed on 1-to-2 billion euro overspend of the total health budget excludes mental health services, which have not been allocated a sufficient portion of that, never mind over spending as an issue.

2. Recruitment and Retention:

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.

3. An ICT system that put the patient at centre:

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 more urgent than ever. 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.

4. Clear and accountable:

The government must re-establish and fund the role of Mental Health Director/Lead and the Mental Health Division as a matter of urgency, to include the current Clinical Lead for CAMHS and Youth.

5. A multitude of supports, treatments, and care services at multiple levels:

The early and important interventions 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 funding, planning and implementation to reduce the number of patients requiring secondary services.

#ItsAboutPeople