



An Taoiseach,
Mr Micheál Martin, TD
Government Buildings
Merrion St Upper
Dublin 2

4th October 2021

Dear Taoiseach,

We, the undersigned members of Mental Health Reform, call on the Irish Government to prioritise funding our mental health services in the upcoming budget.

Over the last 18 months, our nation has faced challenges like never before. During the pandemic, your Government's focus has understandably been on tackling the direct impact of COVID-19. As we move to the next phase of the pandemic, it is time to make mental health a national priority. Building a culturally inclusive and responsive mental health service will be a critical element in how our society rebuilds.

Before the crisis, many people with mental health difficulties were already struggling to access the basic support needed to stay well. COVID-19 has adversely affected the physical and mental well-being of many people in Ireland. Thousands more people have come forward to access mental health services during this difficult period. There has been a disproportionate impact on marginalised groups who face significant challenges in accessing mental health care.

Evidence is emerging of a shadow pandemic, where the burden of trauma will have a profound impact on mental health and primary care services for many years. This needs a clear and comprehensive response from the Government, including a step-change in funding levels.

In order to achieve a credible budget for mental health in 2022, additional funding is required. This is essential to addressing the historical underinvestment in our mental health services, the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and to progress the implementation of our national mental health policy, *Sharing the Vision*. Mental Health Reform recommends that investment of at least €85M is needed to address these areas - €65M to be allocated to the development of new mental health services and €20M to meet the costs of existing levels of service.

Now more than ever we need a fit-for-purpose, culturally inclusive, responsive mental health system in which people can access the care they need when they need it. The future of our mental health services will be shaped by political action taken now. Together, we can lead the world in delivering a COVID-19 recovery that puts the nation's mental health at its heart. We look forward to working with you to deliver on what we believe is our shared agenda.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Coyle, CEO, Mental Health Reform

Tom Maher, Director of Services, St. Patrick's Mental Health Services

Maeve Royston, Senior Manager, Irish Council for Psychotherapy

Ian Power, CEO, Spunout

Dr Sheila Gilheany, CEO, Alcohol Action Ireland

Sharon Lane, CEO, Dysbraxia Ireland

Lisa Molloy, CEO, Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy

Fionn Fitzpatrick, Project Co-ordinator, Gateway Mental Health Project

Patricia Towey, Information and Services Coordinator, Huntington's Disease Association Ireland

Catherine Bond, CEO, Irish Foster Care Association

Hugh Morley, Head of Business, Cork Counselling Services

Ken Kilbride, CEO, ADHD Ireland

Rosie Bissett, CEO, Dyslexia Association of Ireland

Angela Keegan, CEO, Threshold Training Network

Lochlann Scott, CEO, Helplink Mental Health

Fiona Tuomey, CEO, HUGG

Shane Kelly, CEO, The Psychological Society of Ireland

Ruaidhri O'Connor, CEO, Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists

Martin Rogan, CEO, Mental Health Ireland

Caroline Norris, National Operations Manager, Shine

Moninne Griffith, CEO, BeLong To Youth Services

Elaine Austin, CEO, Pieta House

Clare Austick, President, Union of Students in Ireland

Jacinta Hastings, CEO, BodyWhys

Patricia Scully, Chair, Irish Council for Psychotherapy

Dara Ryder, CEO, AHEAD

Audrey Lonergan, President, Irish Association for Infant Mental Health

Martina Smith, CEO, Hail

Niall Mulligan, Executive Director, Samaritans Ireland

Michèle Kerrigan, CEO, Grow

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Mary McHugh, Company Director, Irish Online Counselling & Psychotherapy Service

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Áine Daly, Office Manager, National Association for Pastoral Counselling and Psychotherapy

Samantha McGarry, Chairperson, Family Therapy Association of Ireland

Vivian Geiran, Chair, Irish Association of Social Workers

John Church, CEO, ISPCC Childline

Pat Dennigan, CEO, Focus Ireland

John Dolan, CEO, Disability Federation of Ireland

Sanjay Gulati, Head of Drugs, Health and Homeless, Merchants Quay Ireland

Kevin Whelan, CEO, Fighting Blindness

Brendan McCarthy, CEO, Cork Mental Health Foundation

Carol Moore, Trustee, Dual Diagnosis
Kevin Burn, CEO, Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service
Nick Henderson, CEO, Irish Refugee Council
Aisling Farrell, CEO, Suicide or Survive
Sam McGuinness, CEO, Dublin Simon Community
Ciara O' Connor Walsh, Director, A Lust for Life
Thomas McCann, Director, Traveller Counselling Service
Joseph Duffy, CEO, Jigsaw
Tanya Ward, CEO, Children's Rights Alliance
Maria Fleming, CEO, First Fortnight
Dr Caroline Munyi, Migrant Women's Health Coordinator, AkiDWA
Suzanne Ennis, Clinical Manager, Turn2me
Fiona Ní Chinnéide, Executive Director, Irish Penal Reform Trust