

## Psychological Society of Ireland makes recommendations to address psychology recruitment crisis

The Health Service Executive (HSE) report 'Workforce Planning – Mental Health: Assessing Supply and Demand' is welcomed by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). The PSI is pleased to see the HSE Mental Health Services setting-out to design a workforce planning process to proactively manage staffing types, and levels, according to demand for services arising from current and future models of care. However, it is a source of some frustration that after such significant gaps being highlighted, the decision to implement a recruitment embargo exacerbates the gaps in service provision already emphasised in the report.

The HSE report notes that 'A Vision for Change' is a strategy document which sets out the direction for Mental Health Services in Ireland. It describes a framework for building and fostering positive mental health across the entire community and for providing accessible, community-based, specialist services for people with mental health difficulties.

This report noted, under the 'Resource and Deployment' section, that currently Mental Health has an overall workforce which is at 76% of A Vision for Change (VfC) recommended levels. This is an average figure calculated across all disciplines and does not reflect very concerning staff shortages with regard to Psychology in particular. It must also be considered that VfC figures are not adjusted for social deprivation or other societal factors.

### Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

- CAMHS VfC recommended number of Psychologists – **190.5**
- Actual number of Psychologists in post – **72.5**
- This means that, currently on average nationally, only **38%** of the recommended number of Psychologists for CAMHS are in post
- Nationally, the numbers in post range from a low of 21.1% to 58.8%
- In contrast, the numbers of Consultant Psychiatrists available nationally in CAMHS sits at 75.5% with Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHDs) averaging at 87.7%

### General Adult Mental Health Teams

- VfC recommended number of Psychologists – **190.5**
- Actual number of Psychologists in post – **132.2**
- This means that, currently on average nationally, **69%** of the recommended number of Psychologists for General Adult Mental Health Teams are in post

## **Psychiatry of Later Life**

- VfC recommended number of Psychologists – **47.6**
- Actual number of Psychologists in post – **22.1**
- This means that, currently on average nationally, **46%** of the recommended number of Psychologists for Psychiatry of Later Life Mental Health Teams are in post

In contrast, in many Community Health Organisations nationally, the numbers of both Consultant Psychiatrists and NCHDs are far above the numbers recommended by VfC (ranging from 101% to 125.7%).

At its core, VfC proposes a holistic view of mental health and recommends an integrated multidisciplinary approach to addressing the biological, psychological and social factors that contribute to mental health problems. Without equity of staffing of disciplines on mental health teams in Ireland, a true holistic multidisciplinary approach will continue to be aspirational. Service users of Community Mental Health Teams deserve to have access to the full range of mental health professionals to support them in their recovery.

The Psychological Society of Ireland recommends the following to begin to address the issues noted above:

1. Additional funding needs to be allocated for professional training courses to begin to bridge the gap between the numbers of psychologists available versus what is recommended. This will include:
  - a. Additional Clinical Psychology places;
  - b. Funding of already existing Counselling Psychology training places;
  - c. Funding of already existing Educational Psychology training places.
2. Increase the number of Senior Psychologist posts in mental health settings which will improve staff retention in mental health and provide the necessary supervisory structures to support staff grade psychologists in their work;
3. Address currently employed psychologists' requirement for unnecessary in-service training prior to promotion;
4. Address issues of recruitment practices in the HSE which has resulted in many qualified psychologists being deemed ineligible to apply for areas most understaffed;
5. Review funding of training in light of lower than expected transition from funded training to employment.

## **ENDS.**

For further information, or to arrange an interview with a PSI spokesperson, please contact:

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To note:

- The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is the learned and professional body for psychology in the Republic of Ireland. Established in 1970, the Society currently has almost 3,000 members;
- The PSI is committed to maintaining high standards of practice in psychology and also to exploring new and innovative ways of furthering psychology as an applied science
- The HSE Workforce Planning Report is available [here](#) as a PDF.