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For immediate Release

Mental Health Policy Conference 2024 Covers Investment and Climate but not Housing or Reform, says The PSI

President of The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI), Dr Odhrán Mc Carthy, attended the [Mental Health Policy Conference 2024](#) (16th) organised by the Department of Health with the support of the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The event drew together 200 experts in the field of mental health policy, service delivery, research, and advocacy to discuss developments in national mental health policy and delivery. The Conference was convened and opened by Minister for Mental Health and Older People, Mary Butler, with contributions from Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly and An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar.

Dr McCarthy commends Minister Butler for continuing to oversee increases in funding for mental health in successive budgets by the government since 2020, which has resulted in an investment of €1.3 billion in Budget 2024, and further allocation of €10 million in funding to various areas of service.

However, PSI [continues](#) to call for a greater percentage of the overall health budget to be allocated towards mental health. In Ireland, this remains within the 5-6% mark [compared](#) to 13-14% in the UK, and thus it contributes toward significant gaps in Ireland's psychological workforce.

PSI's position on this point aligns with the keynote address by Associate Professor David McDaid, Research Fellow in Health Policy and Health Economics at the Care Policy and Evaluation Centre, London School of Economics. In the address, which focused on the positive

economic case for investment in mental health services and wellbeing initiatives, McDaid encouraged attendees to see mental health as an investment as opposed to a cost.

In keeping with PSI's inclusion of climate anxiety as a key Strategic Theme for 2024, Dr. Ledia Lazeri, Regional Adviser on Mental Health at the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, referenced climate change and also war, as some of the factors we can expect to contribute towards mental health in the coming years.

“Whilst there were many ‘on point’ topics discussed at the Conference, the omission of the social determinants of mental health, such as the negative [mental health impact of the housing crisis](#), was a stark oversight. The dominance of the medical model of mental health, with a deficit of discussion on trauma-informed services at a time of growing social and global turbulence, was also disappointing.

The need and practicalities for reform was also missing. The HSE's [Sharing the Vision](#) that would restructure the typical hierarchical approach within teams, but its implementation which has been continually pushed back, was not acknowledged or mentioned at the Conference.”

ENDS.

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Notes to the editor:

- The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI), with over 4,300 members, is the learned and professional body for the profession in the Republic of Ireland, with the primary object of advancing psychology as an applied science in Ireland and elsewhere.
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