



The Psychological Society of Ireland

Pre-budget 2024 Submission: Fund Ireland's Children's Psychological Future

28 September 2023

Fund Ireland's Children's Psychological Future

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is the learned and professional body for psychologists in Ireland. The Society is active in the promotion of psychological knowledge and practice; engaging and developing its members; and bringing the insights of psychological knowledge to the benefit of society as a whole. Established in 1970, the Society currently has over 4,300 members.

Ireland is continuing to experience an unabated and unprecedented demand for psychological support for our country's children across multiple domains:

- Primary Care Psychology (April 2023 - 15, 725 under 18s waiting for first appointment).
- 6,000 children waiting more than a year for early intervention with Primary Care Psychology.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) – 4,513 children waiting for their first appointment.
- Children's Disability Network Teams ([39% of Psychology posts unfilled](#)).
- The Health Service Executive (HSE) [Report of the National Psychology Project Team](#) estimated a need for an additional 322 psychologists in mental health services alone.
- The 2021 [Government Disability Capacity Review to 2032](#) stated that the number of psychologists in disability services needs to double by 2032.

Each year approximately 100 psychologists enter professional training programmes. This is not meeting current or future demands for psychological support for our children.

Early intervention improves psychological outcomes for our children and saves money that needs to be spent on costlier specialist services where there are absences of primary care level supports. This was recognised by the Government in 2001 in its report [Primary Care: A New Direction](#) noting that "*The development of a properly integrated primary care service can lead to better outcomes, better health status and better cost-effectiveness*".

The key to the delivery of high-quality psychological services is the sufficient availability of skilled and trained personnel; however, there are major shortfalls in the provision of psychological services due to inadequate staffing levels resulting in long waiting lists and significant difficulties in both the recruitment and retention of trained staff. One of the key factors is the inadequate number of funded post-graduate training places.

The PSI is again calling on the Government in Budget 2024 to provide multi-annual funding to address the significant gaps in Ireland's psychological workforce. The PSI is urging Government to:

1. Fund an **additional** 50 trainee psychology posts across the professional doctoral programmes for a 5-year period which would necessitate an additional €2.52 million in funding per year (€12.6 million over 5 years).

2. To coordinate the management and placement of current and increased numbers of trainees, the Government must fund, with immediate effect and mandate, the HSE to enact the establishment of their own recommendations for the establishment of a National Psychology Placement Office which has been [costed](#) as requiring funding of €770,000 per year.

Fund Ireland's Children's Psychological Future