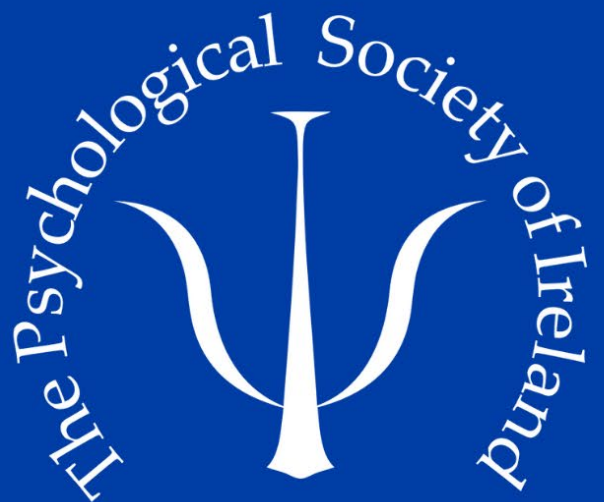


THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF
IRELAND

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

2020



Cumann Síceolaithe Éireann

Psychological Society of Ireland Pre-Budget Submission 2020

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is a learned and learning society 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 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.

Our vision is to advance the psychological wellbeing of individuals, communities and organisations. Our mission is to support and challenge a community of professionals to develop and improve their competence and practice. This will enhance their ability to translate psychological science, to contribute to public discourse and to develop accessible practical tools for everyday living and wellbeing.

Main Recommendations of the PSI Pre-Budget Submission:

- Provision of individually allocated Continuous Professional Development (CPD) budgets for Psychologists working in the Civil / Public Service;
- That the Government would establish a working party, in conjunction with the PSI, to establish an evidence-based training programme for the Assistant Psychologist grade;
- A commitment to fund the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology training programme;
- A commitment to fund the Doctorate in Educational Psychology training programme;
- An expansion of the number of funded places in Doctorate in Clinical Psychology training programme places;
- The development of funding routes and models that support the range of research activity undertaken by Psychologists in a range of public service settings;
- A commitment by the Government to extend the funding of the Health Service Executive (HSE) Assistant Psychologist pilot programme so that Assistant Psychologists become firmly embedded within the spectrum of psychological supports available.

The following pre-budget submission to the Government, and associated recommendations, is made in the context of:

1. 3,345 adults on waiting lists for counselling appointments;
2. A 2018 HSE Mental Health Workforce Planning Report notes that there are 201 Psychologists less than recommended by A Vision for Change in post (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) -118, Adult Mental Health -58, Mental Health of Older Adults – 25);

3. There were 2,523 children on the HSE CAMHS waiting list in January 2019;
4. Only 21% of Clinical Psychology graduates go onto to work in Mental Health Services;
5. Disability Act Compliance -Assessments completed within timelines (3rd quarter of 2018) reached only 8.9% of target levels;
6. 6,300 children and teenagers were waiting for a Primary Care Psychology appointment in Ireland at the end of August 2018;
7. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2008) has highlighted that increased access to psychological therapies for service users are associated with positive outcomes in terms of physical and mental health, while guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommend psychological therapies as the first-line treatment of choice for clients suffering from mild to moderate depression and generalised anxiety disorder (NICE 2011);
8. A Vision for Change (DoHC, 2006) emphasised the need for a comprehensive range of psychological therapies to meet the increasing demand from General Practitioners (GPs) and service users for alternatives to medication in treating mild to moderate mental health difficulties. Nationally, psychological services that focus on the provision of psychological therapies are an imperative;
9. In 2006, A Vision for Change estimated that it would take 10 years to produce the additional Psychologists needed to meet service demand based on the proposed model of mental health service provision. These numbers did not take account of other service areas such as Child and Family, Disability, Oncology and Older People's services. However, demand for psychological assessment, intervention and treatment for a range of mental health difficulties and developmental disorders has grown over the past decade in line with increases in our population and rates of immigration;
10. There are large geographic areas of the country that have a much lower level of Psychologists available relative to the national value;
11. There are currently a number of services within the HSE who have posts which are vacant and are not meeting recommendations set out in A Vision for Change (DoHC, 2006), including Child and Family Services, Primary Care Psychology, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, and Disability Services. Instead of being able to offer early intervention and assessment, as recommended in A Vision for Change (DoHC, 2006), waiting lists and waiting times for a range of mental health and other Psychology services are growing;
12. The 2015 ('New Connections') review of the Irish Prison Service Psychology Service by international expert Dr Frank Porporino was unequivocal in stating that the *minimum* ratio of psychologists : people in custody in order to make Ireland's community safety and mental health interventions in custody comparable to other Western democracies is 1:150 and 1:75 with specialist populations. These minimum staffing levels have yet to be achieved across our Prison estate.

Recommendations

- **Provision of individually allocated Continuous Professional Development budgets for Psychologists working in the Civil / Public Service**

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the means by which Psychologists maintain and improve their knowledge, skills, and competence to develop the professional qualities required throughout their professional life. CPD is an integral component in the continuing provision of safe and effective services for the benefit of service users. CPD requires engagement by the Psychologist in a range of learning activities on an on-going basis.

Evidence of CPD will be a condition of professional registration when CORU becomes the competent authority for the regulation of Psychologists. All CORU-registered Psychologists will be required by law to actively maintain their professional competence. However, at present Psychologists do not have individual CPD budgets and are typically required to self-fund. In contrast, on Community Mental Health Teams the Psychiatry discipline has available to them, individually allocated CPD budgets for use for training and ongoing CPD events. The inequity of some members of a mental health team receiving individual CPD budgets, when others do not, must be addressed and rectified.

Government has consistently highlighted the difficulties in recruiting and retaining Psychologists within the HSE. It is proposed that providing funding for individual annually allocated CPD budgets would be a helpful measure likely to partially address this issue.

The PSI is, therefore, recommending that an individual CPD budget of €2000 be allocated to each professionally qualified psychologist working in a state-funded body (e.g. HSE, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Tusla, Irish Prison Service, Section 38 organisations).

- **That the Government would establish a working party, in conjunction with the PSI, to establish an evidence-based training programme for the Assistant Psychologist grade**

The PSI welcomed the establishment of a grade of Assistant Psychologist within the HSE and Irish Prison Service (IPS). At present, there is no specific or standardised educational or training route towards attaining the necessary knowledge, competencies or skills to work as an Assistant Psychologist in applied settings. As the organisation who is committed to maintaining high standards of practice in Psychology in Ireland, and accrediting all Psychology training programmes in Ireland, the PSI is uniquely placed to advise on standards for training for Assistant Psychologists. Our colleagues in Scotland

have developed two specific Masters programmes to prepare early career Psychologists with the necessary skills and competencies to work in either Primary Care or applied settings for children and young people.

The PSI recommends that the Government establishes a working party, in conjunction with the PSI, to establish and fund an evidence-based training programme for the Assistant Psychologist grade.

- **A commitment to fund the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology training programme**

Counselling Psychology is a psychological speciality that ‘focuses on personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span. Counselling Psychologists help people with physical, emotional and mental disorders improve wellbeing, alleviate distress and maladjustment, and resolve crises. ...practitioners in this professional speciality provide assessment, diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology.’ (PSI Counselling Psychology Accreditation Criteria, 2013, p. 3). Counselling Psychology, since its inception in the 1940s in the United States, always placed an emphasis on a strengths-based, client/patient-centred approach to mental health. Together with its focus on diversity, this positions Counselling Psychologists as uniquely suitable to address the mental health needs of a rapidly developing and changing Irish population.

Counselling Psychologists are trained to master and deliver evidence-based psychological therapies. As the health system evolves, growing emphasis has shifted towards evidence-based psychological therapies, person-centred care, recovery-oriented approaches, service user involvement and multi/interdisciplinary collaboration. From their humanistic baseline and integrative scientist-practitioner perspective, Counselling Psychology graduates are ideally placed to contribute to the ongoing development of mental health care provision in Ireland as laid out in A Vision for Change (2006). As such, they are in a particularly strong position to address service needs. Counselling Psychologists currently work in the Irish health services, including HSE services, in a variety of settings including primary care, community care, child, adolescent and adult mental health services, the National Counselling Service, etc.; albeit in non-sufficient numbers.

Counselling Psychology training in Ireland has been provided since the 1980s. Currently, the only existing course is the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology offered in Trinity College Dublin. The course emphasises the scientist-practitioner model and research-informed practice. It is developed in a way that closely monitors the needs of public health service provision. Twelve to 14 students are trained each year to become qualified Counselling Psychologists.

During the course of their studies, Counselling Psychologists spend most of the time on placements, with the total majority of placements being HSE placements (or HSE funded). At present, these placements are unpaid. During these placements, Counselling Psychologists often work side by side with, and complete the same tasks as, other psychology trainees (Clinical Psychology trainees) who are receiving a monthly salary for placement. This is not a fair or equitable situation. This is despite the fact that both have the same criteria to apply for doctoral training (as per PSI accreditation standards) and are both eligible to work for the HSE following training (as per the current HSE eligibility criteria for staff grade Psychologists) – this anomaly and inequality should be resolved as a matter of urgency.

Numbers have remained stagnant on the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology for a number of years. Commitment to funding Counselling Psychology training would further encourage individuals to enrol in what is a very costly self-funded and high calibre training programme. Counselling Psychology graduates are ideally placed to contribute to the ongoing development of mental health care provision in Ireland as set out in the Government's national mental health policy framework (DoHC, 2006). Investing financially in students of Counselling Psychology who are enrolled in an accredited doctoral level training programme with a leading university will also assist in meeting the recommendations set out in the recent workforce planning assessment.

By committing to funding a larger number of trainees, more Psychologists in training will be in a financial position to apply for the programme, thereby increasing intake that will assist in meeting future workforce planning requirements. This will also allow for an increase in a qualified emerging workforce to tackle the high number of children and teenagers on Psychology waiting lists in Primary Care and throughout HSE services operating with significant wait lists. Furthermore, it will enhance the quality of care and reduce pressure on services to have high levels of throughput, allowing for further implementation of high quality psychological treatment and intervention.

The PSI recommends that the Government commits to funding, through the HSE, Doctorate in Counselling Psychology trainees so that there is parity with currently funded Clinical Psychology programmes.

- **A commitment to fund the Doctorate in Educational Psychology training programme**

Recent changes in training requirements have resulted in a new Full-time Doctorate in Educational Psychology in University College Dublin (UCD), and Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick (MIC), in replacement of the Masters programmes. This change is in line with international best practice (UCD, 2017).

Both programmes in UCD and MIC involve; 300 day's unpaid placement in education settings (NEPS, ETBs, Primary and Secondary schools and Third Level colleges) and Health Service Executive (HSE Disability and Child Psychology services). The importance of the role of Trainee Educational Psychologists in Child Disability and Child Psychology services has been acknowledged in the recent HSE report (2016). These Psychologists in training provide a significant service in education, primary care and disability services while working alongside other Psychologists in training who are in receipt of a salary during this period, this is an inequitable situation.

In an attempt to financially support themselves while undertaking the Doctorate programme, it is understood that many students have resorted to taking on additional part-time work. The most significant stressor reported in discussion with Trainee Educational Psychologists is the financial difficulty. For many Trainee Educational Psychologists, they struggle to meet their basic needs.

Following a review of research, it appears that our closest neighbours; Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England, all provide their Trainees with funding. In a recent review of Clinical and Educational Psychology training arrangements in the UK (DH & DfE, 2016), it was reported that currently, all Trainee Educational Psychologists receive a bursary during their first year of training. In their second and third years, Trainee Educational Psychologists apply to local authorities for positions. They are either employed and paid a salary or remain a full-time student and receive a bursary (DH & DfE, 2016). The Department for Education fund a tax-free bursary in year one plus all three-year tuition fees (54% of the total costs).

Proposed funding model:

Year 1: Contribution to fees and student tax-free bursary provided by Government, such as the National Training Fund;

Year 2: Contribution to fees and tax-free bursary or salary provided by the Department of Education;

Year 3: Contribution to fees and tax-free bursary or salary provided by the Department of Health.

- **An expansion of the number of funded places in Doctorate in Clinical Psychology training programme places**

Clinical Psychologists have been to the forefront of delivering evidence-based assessment and intervention in the Irish Health Service since the mid-1960s and have spent their time in direct service provision, clinical training/supervision of others, management activities and in research and audit.

Currently, there are five doctoral level Clinical Psychology training programmes that have developed through and operate in partnership with the HSE. These are based at the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), University College Dublin (UCD), University of Limerick (UL) and University College Cork (UCC). All five Clinical Psychology training programmes are accredited by the PSI and have a common purpose to train professionally qualified Clinical Psychologists to work in the Irish health service.

Clinical Psychologists have the potential to be central to the successful implementation of the Government's *Sláintecare* strategy through the delivery of accessible, equitable, service user-centred, and effective primary care services. Primary care psychology services at present operate with limited capacity due to a shortage of Psychologists in post. Clinical Psychologists add value through ensuring our primary care services are evidence-based, accessible and demonstrate positive outcomes for service-users.

Future supply calculations from the 2018 HSE Workforce Planning Report estimated that at current training levels the supply of Clinical Psychology graduates that will enter mental health posts will be just 55. The HSE has also outlined details of National Clinical Programmes (Dual Diagnosis, Early Intervention Psychosis, Eating Disorders Adult & Children) and planned Service Improvement Initiatives (Mental Health Intellectual Disability CAMHS and General Adult, Weekend Community Mental Health Service (7 over 7)). Clinical Psychologists will play a central role in the planning and delivery of these programmes. In addition, Psychologists play an important role in service delivery in Tusla and the overall number of graduates required will need to take into account the expansion of this role.

Given the existing shortages, this number of graduates will continue to be insufficient to meet demand without significant additional funding to expand the number of Clinical Psychology training programme places. The PSI is willing to work with the Government to discuss mechanisms by which the number of Clinical Psychology graduates can be increased to meet the significant demand that exists for their skillsets.

- **The development of funding routes and models that support the range of research activity undertaken by Psychologists in a range of public service settings**

Psychology is a scientific discipline, and research skills are a core competency of individual Psychologists. Postgraduate Psychologists on professional training programmes, such as those previously mentioned, and PhD programmes in the country's universities receive advanced training in a continuum of research methods, allowing them to contribute to research in a range of areas including health, wellbeing human development, neurocognition, and social functioning. Rigorous psychological research is positioned to inform practice in a range of areas and to contribute to international

developments in our understanding of a large body of human, biological and social factors.

Current major funding routes for psychological research in Ireland include the Irish Research Council, the Health Research Board, and Science Foundation Ireland, as well as opportunities for Psychologists in major research centres (i.e., universities, hospitals, etc.) to collaborate and compete for European funding through schemes such as Horizon 2020. However, two issues exist with the current funding situation.

Firstly, a search of the websites of the main Irish funding bodies previously mentioned returns minimal specific references to Psychology. While the discipline of Psychology clearly includes topics relevant to the agendas of all three funding bodies, there is a concern that some areas of psychological research, for example, conceptual and theoretical studies, developmental research outside the broad health focus, etc., may not complete effectively within these multidisciplinary streams. It is important that existing funding bodies reflect on their current areas of interest to ensure that there are opportunities for psychological research to compete for funding.

The second issue, however, relates to a model of research that is not currently able to compete for these established national funding streams, specifically practice-driven research. Psychologists work in multiple practice settings in the HSE, education and the wider public sector. While the core focus of their activity is the delivery of clinical and professional services, each is also trained in the scientist practitioner model and has the capacity to conduct meaningful research with the goal of informing practice. However, there are limited resource options for this level of activity. While Psychologists within public service settings may have nominal protected time for research, a lack of funding models that recognise practice-based and applied activities means that it is challenging to access additional resources to support this work. Some health settings have developed collaborative relationships with academic centres to advance this activity, but these examples are not common. This represents a significant missed opportunity to capitalise on the skills set and commitment to research of Psychologists in large parts of the public sector. It is essential that the Government explore options to support increased practice-based research activity by Psychologists in the public sector.

- **A commitment by the Government to extend the funding of the Assistant Psychologist pilot programme so that Assistant Psychologists become firmly embedded within the spectrum of psychological supports available**

A Vision for Change recommended the establishment of an Assistant Psychologist grade within the HSE. One of the rationales for this recommendation was that the course entry criteria for professional training courses in Psychology were stringent, and the post would both increase the opportunities for candidates to acquire the necessary experience for

entry to professional training courses. It would also enhance the Psychology services within mental health through the performance of basic tasks, such as assisting with assessments, in-service audit and research activities.

In 2017, the Department of Health provided funding for a two-year pilot of provision of 114 Assistant Psychologists and 20 staff grade Clinical Psychologists in Primary Care services for children and young people. At the same time, Assistant Psychologists were formally recognised as a grade within the HSE and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. This two-year pilot is currently being evaluated by the University of Limerick. Preliminary data suggests that the Assistant Psychologist project was having a positive effect on services through the enhancement of existing primary care Psychology provision. Further data collection is planned which it is hoped will provide a stronger evidence base for the efficacy of this intervention.

The PSI is supportive of the continuation of an Assistant Psychologist grade within the HSE and the IPS, and expansion of the role of Assistant Psychologists into other aspects of Primary Care provision beyond working with children and young people. The Committee on the Future Health Care recognised how primary care plays a vital role in the provision of mental health services. This was also recognised in A Vision for Change where it was noted that the crucial role of the primary care sector in the provision of mental health care, stating that “primary care is a very important part of the mental health framework”, noting that “Most mental health problems are dealt with in primary care without referral on to specialist services. Primary care is, therefore, the main supplier of mental health care for the majority of the population”. Assistant Psychologists can, and do, play an important role in supporting the delivery of psychological assessment and intervention under the supervision and direction of professionally qualified Psychologists.

The grade of Assistant Psychologist is a stepping stone to assist with career progression into professional training programmes (Clinical, Counselling, Educational) and *is not intended to be, nor should be seen as, a career grade in itself*. In order for the successful implementation of Assistant Psychologists into the range of psychological services available within our health services, sufficient numbers of professionally qualified Psychologists of Senior Grade must be available. This is to ensure that all service delivery is done so within safe and evidence-based parameters.

The PSI is open and willing to work directly with the Government on more detailed proposals for the continuation of the Assistant Psychologist grade and its potential extension into other aspects of Primary Care provision.

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