

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) welcomes the publication of the Mental Health Commission final report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI), welcomes the publication of the Mental Health Commission final report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). But the 4,000-member learned and professional body for psychology in the Republic of Ireland, also warns that more needs to be done to replace the current fire-fighting with a fit-for-purpose service.

The PSI strongly endorses the three key themes of the report - Resources, Risk Management and Rights based care – and is specifically advocating for:

- Children and young people who attend specialist mental health services, such as CAMHS, first and foremost have the right to expect safe and effective support in a timely manner with their rights and needs at the centre of that care.
- Children and young people who are in need of CAMHS should be able to access the full range of multi-disciplinary supports available. Inconsistent access to psychologists across each of the teams is of grave concern, and increasing access to psychological therapy has to be a priority for children and young people presenting with moderate or severe mental health difficulties.
- A shared governance and the distributed responsibility model of Mental Health Service which allows for a more effective and accessible service for families that is consistent with client centred, recovery-oriented models of practice for mental health services.

In light of the Report, the PSI recommends the following three actions:

1. Government to publish a fully funded, urgent action-oriented plan to address each and every one of the Mental Health Commission's recommendations with clear timescales for implementation.
2. The establishment of a new system of leadership and clinical governance in CAMHS, as previously called for, that's competency as opposed to specifically discipline-based. This would go some way to addressing concerns raised in the Report in respect of Governance and the Management of Risk.
3. More support for primary care preventions which could both reduce pressure on CAMHS and deliver better outcomes for children and young people

Commenting on the Report PSI President Dr Anne Kehoe said: "We want to thank Dr Finnerty and her team for their vital work on this report. PSI members work extremely hard, in often

difficult front-line conditions across the country, to deliver the best possible outcomes for every child. Central to efficient and effective specialist mental health services are the availability of and access to the right resources at the right time. But what PSI members see, are traumatised children entering a traumatised system that is failing to deliver the service and supports that they need and deserve. For a CAMHS service that is fit-for-purpose it needs to be resourced to the levels required. We need minimum safe staffing levels for CAMHS teams to operate under, similar to the system used in acute inpatient units.

"What was clear to many already and is confirmed in this report, is that the service is not delivering, but rather is fire-fighting with limited staffing, unacceptably long waiting lists, non-existent CPD, no integrated IT system or database. This is further exasperated by how we measure the service, which is by KPIs based only on when a first appointment is offered, and not on the children and young people's actual experiences of the service they received, and most importantly the actual outcomes for them.

"As a society, we ask children who are struggling to share their difficulties and we tell them that help is available. But if we do not adequately value our children's mental health, and translate this into appropriate support, especially at the most vulnerable time in their lives, then we are creating a crisis-in-waiting. Because they will remember that they didn't get the help they needed, at the time they needed it and they may not reach out the next time"

ENDS.

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To note:

- The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI), with over 4,000 members, is the learned and professional body for the profession in the Republic of Ireland, with the primary objective of advancing psychology as an applied science in Ireland and elsewhere.
- Connect with the PSI through [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).
- The full report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) can be [accessed here](#).