



Press release - Monday 06 March 2023

Psychological Society of Ireland comments on RTÉ Investigates report regarding unregulated psychologists

Following the airing of *RTÉ Investigates* on Monday 06 March 2023, the Psychological Society of Ireland wishes to comment on the content of the programme, particularly statutory regulation, and the practising as a psychologist by unqualified individuals.

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is the learned and professional body for psychologists in Ireland. Established in 1970, the Society currently has over 4,000 members. The PSI is committed to the promotion of psychological knowledge and practice; engaging and developing its members; and bringing the insights of psychological knowledge to the benefit of society. The PSI strongly advocates for the protection of the public and protecting the discipline and profession of psychology. Membership of the PSI is on a voluntary basis.

The individual, Ms Caroline Goldsmith, identified in the *RTÉ Investigates* report was previously a PSI member. When she applied, her then-standing membership of the British Psychological Society (BPS) allowed her PSI membership due to the PSI having a mutual recognition agreement with the BPS. During Ms Goldsmith's membership, the PSI received a complaint which the Society's Board of Professional Conduct investigated. The outcome of the investigation was that Ms Goldsmith had a case to answer in relation to five specified articles from the PSI Code of Professional Ethics and was required to give an undertaking not to carry out work as a psychologist unless qualified to do so. If/when qualified, she would need to provide evidence of the supervised practice by a qualified registered psychologist or qualified psychologist eligible for registration for a period of two years. Ms Goldsmith never provided any undertaking to the PSI. Subsequent to this, the individual did not renew her membership and, therefore, was not a PSI member with a responsibility to abide by the PSI Code of Professional Ethics for members.

There is currently no system of statutory registration for psychologists in Ireland where the term psychologist is a protected title. Whilst the PSI is the professional body for psychology and psychologists, the Society is not a statutory regulator. CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health regulatory body which has the statutory power to regulate a wide range of professions. CORU has yet to regulate the profession of psychology.

The key driver behind the regulation of health and social care professionals, including psychology, is patient and service user safety and the protection of the public. Patient and service users must have confidence that the professional providing a service to them is appropriately qualified to do so, fully competent, and of good standing.

Statutory registration through CORU is a system whereby each individual member of a profession is recognised by a specific body as being competent to practice their profession under a formal mechanism that is provided for by law. Unlike systems of voluntary registration, statutory registration is a legally binding process; all persons wishing to practice must be registered. Therefore, anyone who is unregistered can be legally prosecuted for practising.

The Society has substantial concerns that the dual stream process proposed in the CORU update of December 2022 makes reference to “simultaneously continuing to work towards the longer-term objective of protection of the title psychologist” without any indicators of a specific timescale in which this will occur. In the December 2022 update, it is noted that: “The Board is now examining which psychology specialisms should be prioritised for regulation”. The PSI is concerned that there is a risk that if the list of psychology specialisms to be regulated is too restrictive this will result in professionals not registering with the regulator and placing the public at unnecessary and preventable risk of harm. It appears that initially CORU plans to protect titles such as, for example, ‘clinical psychologist’. If an individual took up statutory registration under the term ‘clinical psychologist’ but was then struck off, they could simply call themselves a child psychologist and continue working, thereby providing no protection to the public as the title of ‘psychologist’ itself is not protected. The PSI’s position is that it is imperative that the title of ‘psychologist’ becomes a legally protected title without further delay.

The PSI would be very concerned if any individual who was found not to have the appropriate qualifications was practising as a psychologist, and further reinforces the need for urgent implementation of statutory registration and protection of the title of ‘psychologist’.

The PSI is calling on Government and the Department of Health to expedite the enactment of the statutory register for psychologists without any further delay. As the professional body for psychologists, the PSI is eager and willing to support CORU in any way in enacting the long-awaited statutory registration system for psychologists.

PSI president Dr Anne Kehoe states: “The key priority needs to be the protection of all those who access professional psychological services and the wider public. Everyone needs to be assured that the psychological services they are accessing are provided to the highest standard and by an appropriately qualified person. Statutory registration of the title ‘psychologist’ offers the regulation of the use of this title by only those with the appropriate qualifications. The PSI is fully committed and willing to offer any support possible to CORU in moving to statutory registration for the profession of psychology.”

The PSI employs a *Find A Psychologist* directory on the Society's website. The online directory assists anyone to find a psychologist who is recognised by the PSI as being a Chartered Member of the Society. To access this service visit www.psychologicalsociety.ie.

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Points to note:

- The CORU update of December 2022 can be accessed [here](#).
- 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 object of advancing psychology as an applied science in Ireland and elsewhere.
- Connect with the PSI through [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).