



Cumann Síceolaithe Éireann

Press Release – Tuesday 10 May 2022

Psychological Society of Ireland launches new professional practice guidelines for assessment, formulation, and diagnosis of autism in children and adolescents

- Adam Harris, CEO of AsIAm, officially launches guidelines
- Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children, addresses importance of the PSI guidelines

Tuesday 10 May 2022: The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) today launched the second edition of the *Professional Practice Guidelines for the Assessment, Formulation, and Diagnosis of Autism in Children and Adolescents*.

The event saw Adam Harris, CEO of Ireland's national autism charity AsIAm, officially launch the PSI guidelines. Mr Harris stated: "The document engages with the real tension which exists between the importance of an accurate, empowering diagnosis on the one hand, and the development of equitable needs-based services on the other."

"Whilst we know that over time diagnosis may be less important for accessing services, it will remain critically important for informing the supports that are provided by enabling an individual, a family and the professionals who work with us to best understand what supports are required."

The Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon, also joined the PSI in welcoming the guidelines, which promote a human rights-based model of disability. Dr Muldoon stated: "From a children's rights viewpoint, the production of the PSI's *Professional Practice Guidelines for the Assessment, Formulation, and Diagnosis of Autism in Children and Adolescents* is crucial in maintaining the drive to ensure the best possible professional support for all children who may be considered as having autism."

Dr Niall Muldoon commended the human rights work undertaken by the Psychological Society of Ireland: "The PSI's work in campaigning for the rights of so many of Ireland's vulnerable citizens has been tireless over the past few years and I note that the Society now has a new Special Interest

Group on Human Rights in Psychology – what a fantastic commitment to equality in all areas of the human experience.”

The new edition of the guidelines, which replace the first edition from 2010, has been developed to promote proficiency and to help facilitate a high level of professional practice by psychologists. The guidelines were developed over a three-year process, led by a working group from the committee of the PSI Special Interest Group in Autism, including autistic psychologists, and in consultation with the broader membership of the PSI. Ruth Connolly, Chair of the PSI Special Interest Group in Autism, praised the effort of the working group and discussed how “since the publication of the 2010 guidelines the landscape of autism awareness, understanding, research, and practice has changed considerably, both internationally and within the Irish context.”

Speaking at the launch, PSI president Dr Vincent McDarby stated: “It is vitally important that experienced psychologists are empowered to use their clinical judgement to ensure that individual needs are met, and these guidelines emphasise the need for flexibility in relation to the essential components of the assessment process.

“Autistic children and adolescents deserve the same chances in life as their peers; improving the diagnosis process is the first important step on that journey.”

ENDS.

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Photos and captions



Photo **PSI_autism_launch_doc**: The Psychological Society of Ireland autism assessment guidelines were launched by Adam Harris. Photo: Tommy Dickson



Photo **PSI_autism_launch_Niall_Muldoon**: Ombudsman for Children Dr Niall Muldoon speaking at the launch of the Psychological Society of Ireland autism assessment guidelines.

Photo: Tommy Dickson



Photo **PSI_autism_launch_Adam_Harris**: Adam Harris of AslAm launches the Psychological Society of Ireland autism assessment guidelines. Photo: Tommy Dickson

To note:

- The PSI, with circa 4,000 members, is the professional body for psychology and psychologists in the Republic of Ireland.
- The PSI is committed to maintaining high standards of practice in psychology and to exploring new and innovative ways of furthering psychology as an applied science.