



Press release – Thursday 14 May 2020

## **The Psychological Society of Ireland responds to the UN Policy Brief on the global psychological impact of COVID-19**

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) welcomes the publication of the United Nations (UN) *Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health*, addressing the global psychological impact of COVID-19.

In launching the publication, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that: *“After decades of neglect and underinvestment in mental health services, the COVID-19 pandemic is now hitting families and communities with additional mental stress.”*

The PSI welcomes the recognition by the UN that mental health services have been chronically underfunded for decades. In Ireland, the PSI continues to advocate for an increase in the percentage of the health budget from 6% to a minimum of the 10% recommended.

Secretary-General António Guterres addressed the mental health impact in the wake of the pandemic: *“Even when the pandemic is brought under control, grief, anxiety and depression will continue to affect people and communities,”* and went on to state: *“Mental health services are an essential part of all government responses to COVID-19. They must be expanded and fully funded.”*

The PSI urgently needs engagement from Government to plan for how, as a society, we will meet the psychological need to come. Mitigating against the impact of isolation, loneliness, job losses, stress and uncertainty requires a cross-departmental approach in conjunction with representative bodies.

Mark Smyth, President of the PSI, states: *“We, as a country, may not have been ready in advance for the COVID-19 health pandemic but we have ample warning of the likely psychological need ahead. Amid a recession everyone will be shouting for more roads, buildings, rail but we need to invest in the most crucial infrastructure projects of all, the psychological well-being of our nation. Mental health funding has never been a vote-defining issue, it now must be. Given the*

psychological impact that COVID-19 has had on us all, now is the time to make sure Government understands this should be thread that flows through any new programme for Government.”

**ENDS.**

Note to Editor:

1. Mark Smyth, PSI President, is available for interview on this item;
2. The PSI, with circa 3,000 members, is the learned and professional body for Psychology in the Republic of Ireland.

**For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:**

**Lisa Stafford**

**PSI Head of Communications**

**087 945 2801**