



College of Psychiatrists calls on Government to address ‘multiple systemic failings in mental health services’

- **Outlines series of recommendations to address crisis**
- **College calls for urgent meeting with Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, and HSE CEO**
- **‘The morale of medical professionals has been significantly impacted by this case, and it is beholden on the Government to implement meaningful reforms as a matter of urgency to restore trust among the public’**

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland (College of Psychiatrists) has called on the Government to urgently implement a series of recommendations in mental health services in response to the publication of the Maskey report into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in South Kerry, and has warned that root and branch reform is needed to address multiple systemic failings in the system.

The College of Psychiatrists is the professional and training body for psychiatrists in Ireland and represents 1,000 professional psychiatrists (both specialists and trainees) across the country.

In a letter sent last week to Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Tánaiste Leo Varadkar, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly, Minister for Mental Health Mary Butler, and HSE CEO Paul Reid, **Dr Imelda Whyte, Chair of the Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of the College of Psychiatrists and Dr William Flannery, President of the College of Psychiatrists**, state that the resourcing of mental health services has been wholly inadequate for some time, which has led directly to a recruitment and retention crisis among doctors across specialties, including psychiatry.

The College has requested an urgent meeting to discuss the crisis and its recommendations on foot of the Maskey report.

Key recommendations from the College of Psychiatrists in response to the Maskey report include:

- The urgent publication of a workforce planning policy document ‘Consultant Psychiatrists – Recruitment and Retention’ drafted by HSE National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) including all key stakeholders.
- An increase of €600,000 in training funding – from €1.3m to €1.9m – to meet adequate demand

- A robust and realistic plan to increase specialist psychiatrist (public) posts from circa 495 currently to 825 by 2028, and fill the current 100 (of 495) vacant posts
- An urgent review into waiting list times
- Broad and comprehensive nationwide and independent review into CAMHS from primary to tertiary care, encompassing a root and branch review of local, regional and national management structures. A review group should include, at a minimum:
 - o A member of a patient and family group
 - o An academic with relevant background
 - o A Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist not linked with HSE
 - o An MDT Mental Health Professional other than a psychiatrist
 - o A HSE representative
 - o An Oireachtas member
- The establishment of regular reviews of the system.
- The reinstatement of a Directorate for Mental Health Services
- The appointment of a National Clinical Lead for Children.

Speaking today, **Dr Imelda Whyte** said: “It has been abundantly clear for some time that the provision of mental health services in this country is broken, and the distressing and disturbing case in South Kerry has highlighted what is an utter systemic failure. The College of Psychiatrists has called on successive Governments for the past ten years to increase the spend on mental health services from a paltry 5.6% of the general health budget to at least 12%, all to no avail.

“This is unacceptable, and unfortunately has contributed to this case in South Kerry CAMHS. The morale of medical professionals has been significantly impacted by this case, and it is beholden on the Government to implement meaningful reforms as a matter of urgency to restore trust among the public.”

Dr William Flannery said: “Personal responsibility is at the heart of this case, but we cannot ignore the significant resourcing and governance issues in our health system which, in turn, has directly led to a widespread recruitment and retention crisis among doctors. We simply do not have enough doctors to meet demand.

Dr Whyte said: “The recruitment and retention crisis among doctors in both psychiatry and across the health system as a whole has been evident for a decade now. This crisis has seen widespread flight away from our health services to other countries where doctors enjoy far better work conditions and a far better work-life balance, and where they are appreciated in a way they are not in Ireland.

“A well planned, developed and funded recruitment strategy in parallel with a well-planned, developed and funded retention strategy to herald change in the services are required now to successfully compete with other health services abroad.”

ENDS

Issued on behalf of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland by Gordon MRM