

**St Patrick's**  
Mental Health Services



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**Opening Address to Oireachtas Committee on the  
Future of Healthcare**

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## **St. Patrick's Mental Health Services Opening address: Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare**

Speaker: Mr. Paul Gilligan

St Patrick's Mental Health Services (SPMHS) is Ireland's largest, independent, not-for-profit mental health service provider. It is committed to the provision of the highest quality mental health care, the promotion of mental health, and advocating for the rights of those experiencing mental health difficulties.

In 2015 the service had over 3000 in-patient admissions, over 14,300 day care attendances and over 14,600 visits to its Dean Clinics. The organisation runs an extensive advocacy programme, the highlights of which are the Walk in My Shoes and Mind Your Selfie campaigns. It also runs a comprehensive service user involvement and training and research programme.

SPMHS welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the development of the new health strategy and would like to thank the Joint Oireachtas Committee for the opportunity to present today. SPMHS is eager to work in partnership with Government and all key stake holders to form and deliver on a new mental health care strategy.

The prevalence of mental health problems in Ireland is well documented, with one in seven adults experiencing a mental health difficulty in the past year. Recent studies suggest that young people in Ireland may have a higher rate of mental health problems than similarly aged young people in other countries. SPMHS believes that Ireland should be committed to the establishment of a world class mental health service.

Such a service should be built on human rights principles with a core emphasis on service user participation. The right to be given the opportunity to live a mentally healthy life should be enshrined in law. Everyone should have access to basic mental healthcare services as a right. The exact services to which people should be entitled to access should be set out in law so that it is clear to both service providers and service users that legal obligations exist and that a right of remedy exists where these are not provided. Essential to this is the grounding of any new mental healthcare strategy in a recovery model in which service user empowerment and choice is paramount.

These principles pertain particularly to young people whose existing constitutional rights to appropriate mental health care need to be recognised and realised. The funding model for any new strategy needs to be grounded in the principles of value defined as outcomes per euro spent.

No strategy will be successful unless the existing stigma surrounding mental health within Irish Society is acknowledged and tackled and this can only be achieved by all stakeholders working together.

Speaker: Mr. Tom Maher

As a percentage of overall health spend, the budget for mental health care in Ireland has reduced from 13% in the mid-1980s to 6.2% in 2015. The comparable budget for mental health care as a percentage of overall health spend in both Britain and Canada is 12%, and in New Zealand is 11%. SPMHS recommends the implementation of the *Vision for Change* recommendation that the mental health budget represent at least 8.24% of the overall health budget.

The future health strategy must be informed by, and include all stakeholders and be conducted in a way to ensure buy-in from service users and their families. Finding a way to actively include families in the care system while protecting the rights of service users is essential.

SPMHS notes that in its 2016 Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child urged consideration of the establishment of a national, specialist independent, advocacy service for all children under 18 years who are engaging with mental health services in Ireland. SPMHS recommends the establishment of such a service.

There is no definitive model of an integrated healthcare system to ensure that patients will have access to a high-quality and efficient care. However, research indicates that there are a number of principles associated with successful integration processes and models. These include: “(i) Comprehensive services across the care continuum (ii) Patient focus (iii) Geographic coverage and rostering (iv) Standardized care delivery through inter-professional teams (v) Performance management (vi) Information systems (vii) Organizational culture and leadership (viii) Physician integration (ix) Governance structure (x) Financial management. SPMHS suggests that any proposals to integrate primary, secondary and community healthcare services are informed by these key principles.

SPMHS has worked with health insurers to develop a funding model for all ambulant care in ambulatory care settings. This model should be considered and included in any new strategy.

The independent sector has an essential role to play in the delivery of a world class health service and it is therefore vital that any new strategy includes involvement of this sector.

Speaker: Prof. James Lucey

It is essential that we make the best services available to all those who need them, in particular, available to those groups of people who are more disadvantaged in our society. Service development must be aware of the social determinants of ill-health. Groups of society on the margin who are homeless or disabled need more access to health services, not less.

There is a need for greater support for family members, in particular for family members caring for persons with mental health difficulties or disability.

Future developments in healthcare need to be evidence based and new technologies introduced that are efficient and cost effective and appropriate in an Irish context. This development will need the establishment of continuing research into healthcare service implementation.

We should begin this research by looking at the services that are required to address the mental health needs of our increasingly ageing population.

We must identify the challenges present in recruiting and retaining staff in health services and in particular in mental health services and therefore take steps to address the shortfalls that exist. To do this we should start by consulting with health service staff in relation to proposed changes and ensure that they are sufficiently supported to carry out their new and changing roles.

Conclusion: Mr. Paul Gilligan

SPMHS is committed to working with Government and all other stakeholders to build a world class mental health service where all people are given the opportunity to live mentally healthy lives and where the rights of people to access recovery based mental health care is enshrined in legislation.

Thank You