

**SUBMISSION FOR: SEANAD PUBLIC CONSULTATION COMMITTEE  
CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN IRELAND**

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**Background**

Clinical Psychologist Private Practice and for HSE Primary Care

Psychotherapist in Private Practice

Teacher-Supervisor for Student in Psychotherapy training

**Considering**

Children do not have easy access to Mental Health Services in the Public Sector for different reason:

- Long waiting list
- CAMHS provide assessment but do not consistently provide support and therapy to children and families
- There is confusion for family and GP regarding which service to refer to and for what reason (for example mental health referrals being received by primary care and disability services).
- Lack of clarity within internal HSE policy of referral pathways for different HSE departments; for example children with self harm presentation are excepted into some CAMHS services and not others.

Children have poor outcomes in Mental Health Services in the Public Sector because:

- A maximum of 6 session are available and offered under the Primary Care Psychology Service Model which is not enough to address the mental health issues. As a result my experience is that the majority of the children will be back on the waiting list for more input.
- There are no other public sector services other than CAMHS and Primary Care. Due to the time limited support available from both of these services families are not offered much needed longer-term intervention and support.
- There are poor prevention programs for Mental Health prevention in School / Sports Club / family

## Proposed Changes

- Creation of a dedicated walk-in clinic service (covering also out of hours/ emergency), with a multidisciplinary team (psychiatrist, psychologist) for assessment purposes, and Psychotherapist (including art/ play therapists) for treatment. This Service will be integrated into the community for ease of access. Such a service will ensure that all children in crisis will receive assessment and an intervention plan at the first point of contact and can then be referred to secondary care services for further investigations (e.g disability).
- Prevention and social inclusion is a key component in childhood mental health. Creation of an interdisciplinary national project with the aim being to promote mental health, to improve early detection as well as care, treatment and follow up of mental diseases accruing in childhood and adolescence. Collaboration between medical and psychological professionals and educators, and teachers needs to be intensified in order to increase awareness of risk factors to mental health of school children. Different activities can be organized: like conferences, training sessions, pedagogical projects supported by a variety of information material, tackling among other problems drug consumption, violence, suicide, sexual health, a healthy lifestyle, peers intervention, and general well-being.
- Psychotherapy to have more of a role in intervention in children and adolescent mental health. At the moment Clinical Psychologists are the major workforce in primary care for Mental Health issues. This is an expensive workforce considering the salary scale: Basic grade Psychologists earn approximately €54,000-84,000, Senior Psychologist can earn in excess of €90,000. Under the current system Clinical Psychologists do not provide mental health diagnosis. This is done by a psychiatrist in CAMHS. The current role that the Clinical Psychologist undertakes with children with mental health diagnosis is similar to that which can be carried out by a psychotherapist. A psychotherapist carrying out this role rather than a clinical psychologist makes more economic sense

as an average salary for a Psychotherapist is €35,000. The Irish Council of Psychotherapy finalized the ICP standard for Working Therapeutically with children and Adolescents in Psychotherapy. This is a useful document to highlight how psychotherapy can be key to a high quality intervention with Children and Adolescents (link: [www.psychotherapycouncil.ie/about/documents](http://www.psychotherapycouncil.ie/about/documents)). The effective Luxembourg model for Child Mental Health Services which includes free of charge ease access psychotherapy services for children and families, also highlights the benefits of Psychotherapy in this area. According to The Legatum Institute Luxembourg was ranked best health system in Europe.