



**College of Psychiatrists  
of Ireland**

Wisdom • Learning • Compassion

**Opening Statement of College of Psychiatrists of Ireland  
to Oireachtas Sub-Committee on Mental Health**

**17<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**Dr William Flannery, President**

Good morning and thank you for your interest in mental health and mental illness.

My name is William Flannery and I am the President of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland. I am a doctor, a specialist in the practice of psychiatry and am employed by the HSE as a Consultant Psychiatrist treating those who are marginalised with an addiction in inner city Dublin.

Also speaking on behalf of the College this morning is Ms Jeannine Webster, who is a member of the College Refocus Committee. Refocus stands for the Recovery Experience Forum of Carers and Users of Services, in other words our Patient/Service User and Family member committee, which also includes psychiatrists.

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland was formed in 2009 and is the professional and educational body for psychiatrists in Ireland. Our mission, of which I am very proud, is to promote excellence in the practice of psychiatry. At the heart of this is training, or recruitment and retention, and it is this that I want to focus this morning.

A trainee in psychiatry holds two contracts, the first is a contract with their employer, the HSE, and the second is a learning agreement with the College. So, I will focus on training, but the numbers needed to train (recruitment) and their experience of employment (retention), is determined by the HSE. Briefly, to support the work of the HSE, the College strongly advocates for the appointment of a Chief Psychiatrist in the Department of Health and a National Director for Mental Health, both of which are mentioned in the Programme of Government.

The first step in becoming a psychiatrist, is to go to medical school and then complete an intern year. Then you can start training to become a specialist in psychiatry, which takes at least 7 years. While working as a doctor, the training over those years comprises work place-based assessments with a Consultant Trainer, placements in various settings, completion of professional examinations and an annual review of progress. Beside Consultant Trainers, training is developed by and delivered through the College by a Dean of Education, a Chief Examiner, Vice Deans, and Mentors. The College is accredited for training by the Medical Council of Ireland and in turn the College accredits centres for training and Consultant trainers. At successful completion of all of this the doctor is entitled to be registered by the Medical Council as a Specialist in the practice of Psychiatry.

I am very proud of our training and the standards we set. We usually top the annual Medical Council survey of Trainee experience, entitled "*Your Training Counts*" and entry to training is competitive, meaning more doctors apply to train with us than we have training spaces.

I need to note that the cost to the College of training is circa 1.9 million euro a year. But we receive circa 1.2 million euro a year from the HSE to cover that cost; the rest or the balance comes from membership subscriptions. The College gets

the least funding for training (funding per trainee) when compared to other Medical bodies. This is not sustainable, particularly if we wish to recruit more Trainees in Psychiatry who will ultimately become specialists (and consultants) in the Mental Health Services.

As to current numbers, the College is allowed to recruit about 60 new trainees a year and there are about 350 trainees currently. There are just under 600 Consultant Psychiatrist Posts, but just under a 100 are either vacant or filled by a non-specialist.

As to future numbers, the number of trainees is determined by planning for Consultant numbers in the future. A lot of work has been done on this by NDTP, National Doctors Training and Planning unit of the HSE, HSE Mental Health, Department of Health Mental Health Unit and ourselves. There is a draft document outlining the psychiatric medical workforce needs for the next ten years. I am told this has been signed off by NDTP and now rests with the Chief Clinical Officer. We now have an estimated number of just over 800 Consultant Posts needed for 2030. The next step from this is to estimate the number of Trainees that need to be recruited.

Training is about treating and working with Patients and their Families/Carers, a collaborative experience. Refocus, who are part of the structure of our College and central to many aspects of training, play a key role in giving the 'lived experience' to our trainees and also for continuing professional development for specialist members. With that I would like to now introduce Ms Jeanine Webster to speak to you.

Thank you.

