



Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health

The life cycle approach to mental health in the context of young people.

Dr Joseph Duffy

CEO

Jigsaw

Opening Statement to:
Oireachtas Sub - Committee on Mental Health

May 9th, 2023.

Jigsaw | Introduction

Firstly, to the Chair and all Committee members, thank you for this opportunity to contribute to, and support, your important work in this area of mental health.

Established in 2006, over the last 17 years, **Jigsaw has a track record in achieving better mental health outcomes for young people, and developing supportive communities by providing a range of primary care services and supports.**

Throughout this time, we have supported over 60,000 young people. This has been through a range of direct, one-to-one mental health interventions, as well as indirectly by developing and rolling out innovative and effective solutions for young people and those around them, in settings where they live, learn, work and play.

With the support of public and private funds (including the HSE (Mental Health)), our current model sees us deliver a range of free primary care mental health services and supports for young people and adults including:

- delivering, one-to-one, community-based therapeutic sessions with young people (aged 12-25) across 14 services.
- offering community-based programmes aimed at better informing, supporting, educating and empowering young people and those around them.
- undertaking pioneering research and robust evaluation leading to transformative evidence.
- providing a wide range of online mental health supports through jigsaw.ie
- rolling out a comprehensive post primary schools programme (One Good School™) aimed at supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people by developing a shared responsibility for mental health across the whole school community.
- supporting schools to promote mental and wellbeing, via a comprehensive online Jigsaw Schools Hub (launched in March 2021).
- establishing a specific team to focus on promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education settings.

For information, support, or just to find out more about what we do, visit jigsaw.ie



Ireland's youth mental health system is increasingly under pressure – over-stretched, under-resourced and, in large parts, inadequate. Demand continues to outstrip the system's ability to cope. Funding is insufficient. Integrated, joined-up thinking remains an aspiration in many areas.

And yet, behind a discourse increasingly dominated by '*demand*', '*systems*' and '*integration*', are young people struggling to cope and parents left to shoulder the pain. Something has to change.

Here in Ireland, we know from the My World Survey 2 (published by Jigsaw in association with the School of Psychology, UCD in 2019), that there has been a significant increase in the levels of anxiety and depression among young people in over the past decade.

While Covid 19 has contributed significantly to a deterioration in young people's mental health, long before Covid, the indicators were not good.

Internationally, large-scale studies point to increasing mental health difficulties (e.g. symptoms of distress or anxiety, or engaging in self-harm) among young people.

At Jigsaw, we have experienced this first hand, where more and more young people are seeking the services of Jigsaw across the country and online.

In 2022:

- **8,405 young people sought support from our community-based services.** Our second highest number of referrals in a single year
- **36,360 appointments offered to young people across our community-based services.** Our highest number of appointments ever in a single year
- **1,464 live chats** and 527 email-based support sessions took place
- Last year, the most common concerns among young people attending Jigsaw's brief intervention services were **anxiety (68%), low mood (40%) and sleep changes (34%)**
- **32,213 people took part** in our community-based workshops and training courses
- **146 post primary schools signed up** for our One Good School™ programme
- **18,446 users of our online Jigsaw Schools Hub**, supporting teachers with classrooms resources and more
- **26 clubs participated in our One Good Club™** programme in partnership with Lidl and the LGFA
- **1,234 sports coaches** participated in our One Good Coach™ eLearning courses.

Many of our services continue to experience unmanageable demand, resulting in the time between first contact and first appointment, in several Jigsaw services, remaining too long. This is particularly concerning as we aim to provide early intervention mental health services for young people. While we are encouraged to see that Jigsaw continues to be recognised as a high quality, youth-friendly and

For information, support, or just to find out more about what we do, visit jigsaw.ie



impactful service - and that young people are reaching out for support - we are aware that more must be done to ensure help is available when they need it.

Jigsaw | Our Recommendations.

There are five key recommendations we are bringing forward to support the development of a better system of youth mental health care:

1. We must change the current funding model.

A new model of funding for youth mental services and supports, especially at the primary level, is essential as a matter of urgency now, more than ever. It is simply not good enough that just over 5% of the State's total health budget is ring-fenced for mental health in Ireland. We must - at a minimum - increase mental health funding in line with Sláintecare recommendations of 10%.

2. We must prioritise community-based, primary care services and supports that are preventive and early interventionist in approach.

Far more attention, at a policy and funding level, needs to be devoted to preventing mental ill-health, rather than intervening when mental health difficulties have become more entrenched or have reached crisis. A lack of focus on early intervention and prevention means too many young people are falling through the gaps between primary and secondary care. Investment in keeping young people well, rather than waiting until they have become very unwell is key - it will save money, but more importantly, it has the potential to save young lives.

3. We must listen to young people.

With a recognised and established history of youth engagement and participation, Jigsaw is aware of young people's ability and right to be involved in the decision making that affects them. This needs to be further extended across all areas of policy development around youth mental health.

4. We need to develop a workforce strategy.

As a country, we simply do not have enough mental health professionals to deliver vital care. A shortage of trained mental health professionals, not just in Jigsaw, but in the wider mental health services, continues to stretch limited resources and is impacting on the timely support we need to offer. More must be invested in training mental health professionals and keeping qualified healthcare professionals in the health service.

5. We must strive for better integration.

We must work for better integration of services that support young people's mental health and offer smoother care pathways in both the mental health and social care arena. We believe increased shared ownership, leadership and accountability needs to be in place across the voluntary and statutory sector as a matter of urgency.

**For information, support, or just to find out
more about what we do, visit jigsaw.ie**



As such, we must accelerate the appointment of a Director of Mental Health Services in the HSE to lead reform of our mental health system of care. While we welcome the recent recruitment of a Youth Mental Health Lead, a Director of Mental Health Services will ensure increased accountability, better integration of services, a strong strategic focus and ultimately, can ensure better mental health outcomes for our young people.

Areas of immediate focus (all in line with *Sharing the Vision*) should include addressing inter-agency referrals, funding model, data-sharing across services, extension of the age range in CAMHS from 12-18 to 12-25, and more consistent application of the referral guidelines.

Jigsaw | Concluding Remarks

While much remains unpredictable, what is clear to us in Jigsaw is that increased investment, improved integration and strong political will are now needed if we are to make a meaningful difference to the mental health and wellbeing of Ireland's young people, and give them the best possible chance at a full and healthy future.

At Jigsaw, we understand that the solutions are not always easy. However, we are adopting a wide range of strategies to improve efficiency, maximise clinical activity and enhance timeliness of our services.

In addition, our work 'outside the session room' is hugely important - prevention and intervention must go hand-in-hand. As such, we are investing heavily in our digital offerings and are seeing a significant appetite for same. We are continuing to support communities to promote positive wellbeing with a range of offerings – One Good School™, One Good Club™, Jigsaw Schools Hub and more.

In short, we are actively seeking solutions.

State investment in this area is required now - the young people of today are our future professionals, parents, politicians and One Good Adults®, who, in turn, can go on to support the mental health of future generations of young people.

Thank you again for this opportunity – I look forward to your comments and questions.

**For information, support, or just to find out
more about what we do, visit jigsaw.ie**

Jigsaw, registered charity in Ireland.
Registered charity number 20064846. Charity revenue number 17439.

