



Better Mental

Health

Labour's Plan for improving access to mental health services

## Our commitments

- **Extend the free Counselling in Primary Care service to all 16-25 year olds** on completion of eMental Health courses and with the recommendation of a GP. We will also provide additional training for GPs in detection and intervention in mental health issues.
- **Provide greater resources for state-funded mental health awareness campaigns.** This will fund consistent campaigns to tackle prejudices and discrimination against those suffering from problems with their mental health.
- **Bring in a new registration and licensing system for mental health professionals.** This will include all counsellors, therapists and psychologists working in the State to ensure a consistent standard of care.
- **Extend the opening hours of Community Mental Health Centres.** Labour will ensure these vital resources are open late into the evening and through the weekend so people can access services when they need them.
- **Develop a new service to address dual diagnosis.** This will ensure a clearer, more effective means of treatment where both addiction and mental health issues are identified. The service will be headed by a new HSE National Director for Alcohol and Addiction.
- **Establish the Jigsaw service in 35 new locations across towns and cities across the country.** Jigsaw is a programme operated by Headstrong that seeks to ensure every young person between the ages of 12-25 has somewhere to turn and somebody to talk to.

# INTRODUCTION

Mental health is key to enjoying a happy and fulfilling life. The Labour Party firmly believes that it should always be accorded the same priority as physical health.

We recognise that almost every person in this country is likely to be affected by mental health problems at some stage in their lives, either themselves directly or through a family member or friend. That's why it's key our mental health strategies are maintained through good times and bad. Over the last five years, Labour has brought a new energy, focus and outlook to mental health in Ireland. Working within constrained economic circumstances we prioritised and delivered on making mental health the real priority it should always remain.

We are determined to see mental health stay at the heart of government policy over the next five years. Labour believes in putting the patient first, in meaningful investment in modern facilities, and in taking action to tackle the stigma that still surrounds mental health issues in our society.

We are especially committed to placing a new focus on the mental health of our young people. 75% of mental health difficulties tend to present between the ages of 15 and 25. At present, our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service is tasked with treating severe mental health problems. We need an intermediate service that can help young people with mild to moderate mental health difficulties, and Labour is determined to provide one by extending the right to talk therapy through the Counselling in Primary Care programme.



### **Delivering mental health care in the community**

The Labour Party believes that 90% of healthcare should be provided in the community. This approach has the potential to both decrease pressure on our hospital system and improve quality-of-life for people by allowing them to remain as much as possible within their own homes and social networks.

Working in government, Labour has significantly reformed our mental health services by providing approximately 1,150 new mental health posts and a strengthened system of Community Mental Health Teams so that people in need of mental health supports can access them from within their own communities. In keeping with our 2011 manifesto commitment to improve access to counselling and psychotherapy, we launched the Counselling in Primary Care service in July 2013. CIPC is a free counselling service for adult Medical Card holders and over 13,500 people can avail of the service each year.

Guided by the recommendations of the Vision for Change document, we have secured the largest capital investment programme in mental health in 100 years, which has allowed for the replacement of old, outdated psychiatric hospitals with high-quality, purpose-build facilities for the needs of adults, children and older persons. Our plan is to ensure all new Primary Care Facilities include an integrated mental health service.

Labour has also upgraded our system of Psychiatry of Old Age Teams to ensure they now extend from coast to coast, so that all older persons can benefit from the specialist skills of an Old Age Psychiatrist. Labour will continue to fund these Teams and will prioritise their growth in areas with older-than-average populations. We want to ensure that older people can live, be active and access mental health services within their local community. Providing these services at local level will go hand in hand with the State's considerable investment into Dementia prevention and care research projects to

improve the quality of treatment for some of the most common mental health issues facing older citizens.

### **Mental health funding and reform**

Labour in government has made sure to ring-fence mental health funding to ensure the State can continue to pay for these vital services. If returned to government, we will continue to ring-fence funding.

We will also continue to reform the workings of the Irish mental health system in ways that improve quality and effectiveness of care. A new service will be developed to address dual diagnosis (addiction and mental health), headed by a new HSE National Director for Alcohol and Addiction. We will establish a registration and licensing system for all practising counsellors, therapists and psychologists.

We will also remove barriers to accessing services by extending the opening hours of Community Mental Health Centres into the late evening and through the weekend. This will make it easier than ever for service users and family members to access these services when needed.

### **A more compassionate culture**

Labour strongly believes in working to create a more positive mental health culture in Ireland. We have already seen enormous strides in this area, with more openness and awareness of mental health issues gradually becoming the norm. Throughout our time in Government, we have sought to foster a more mature attitude towards mental health through supporting and funding progressive mental health awareness campaigns like See Change, #LittleThings, Green Ribbon and First Fortnight.

We want to build on this important work by establishing a dedicated mental health awareness and advertising programme. This will continually work towards continuing the breakdown of old prejudices and stigma that still surround many mental health issues in our society. By ensuring a consistent programme

with reliable funding, we can guarantee the kind of thorough and consistent public campaigns that can make a real difference to attitudes.

In addition, we need to ensure our medical professionals receive the additional training they need to keep them at the cutting edge of compassionate care. We want all Primary Care Teams and GPs to be fully trained in detection, recognition and intervention in cases of depression, psychosis and eating disorders. This will be achieved through the use of standardised mental health screening tools which will be made available in all practices. It will ensure that medical professionals can identify prospective mental health difficulties as early as possible. As in all areas, early intervention remains the most effective method of tackling mental health difficulties.

## KEY TO A COMPASSIONATE STRATEGY IS KEEPING UP THE FIGHT AGAINST SUICIDE IN IRELAND. LABOUR KNOWS THAT TOO MANY FAMILIES HAVE SUFFERED THROUGH HAVING A FRIEND OR RELATIVE DIE BY SUICIDE

### Combatting suicide

Key to a compassionate strategy is keeping up the fight against suicide in Ireland. Labour knows that too many families have suffered

through having a friend or relative die by suicide.

Labour in government introduced a vital new comprehensive framework strategy for suicide prevention: Connecting for Life. We have also significantly increased spending on suicide prevention in order to introduce additional Suicide Prevention Resources Officers, Emergency Department specialists and Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurses.

We will make it a top priority to extend the level of State investment in suicide prevention strategies in line with the Connecting for Life strategy. This plan brings together the very best in Irish and international research, and puts forward proven strategies to better coordinate our work in this vital area. As part of our strategy, Labour will ensure the recruitment of an additional 50 suicide prevention nurses.

### Meeting the needs of young people

As a community it is essential we take care of the mental health needs of our young people. Most mental health problems begin when we are young. That's why early intervention and support is essential if we are to give our young people the best possible start in life. A major part of Labour's policy in government has been supporting the mental health needs of young people.

One way in which this has been achieved is through funding the development and extension of the Jigsaw service delivered by Headstrong. This programme aims to ensure that every young person has someone to turn to and talk to in times of crisis and difficulty. While in Government, targeted funding has allowed us to bring Jigsaw to ten communities across the country. We want to continue with this work. Our plan is to extend the Jigsaw service to 35 new locations in towns and cities across the country.

The number of specialist and age-appropriate inpatient mental health beds for children has quadrupled since 2011. These have been vital to supporting the work of the enhanced community mental health teams for children

with mental health needs. We have achieved a substantial reduction in the number of young people who have to be temporarily accommodated in adult psychiatric wards. The Government is strongly on track to entirely eliminate this practice over the lifetime of the next Government.

Labour in government has also overseen the development of additional Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) teams of mental health professionals. To ensure CAMHS is properly staffed, we have accelerated the appointment of additional therapists, nurses, social workers, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists. Labour will continue to invest in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and will especially target disadvantaged communities. We will ensure that these vital services are provided for the most at-risk children and young people regardless of their location or financial means.

In addition to extending support services for young people, Labour knows that access to child and adolescent counselling needs to be widened as a matter of priority. Just as we are committed to abolishing fees for access to GP services, we want to build a mental health system where no young person cannot access necessary talk therapy because of affordability.

Our plan is to extend the Counselling in Primary Care service to all 16-25 year olds upon completion of eMental Health courses and with a GP's recommendation. We will also build up the role of eMental Health technology as a key supporting component of our young mental health strategy.

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## Costings

| Policy  | Cost    |
|---|---------|
| Mental Health Anti-discrimination Campaign                | 5m      |
| Access for CIPC programme for all 16-25 year olds         | 7m      |
| Streamline addiction and community mental health services | 10m     |
| Establish Jigsaw service in all major towns or services   | 43.8m   |
| Extend opening hours of Community Mental Health Centres   | 29.2m   |
| 50 suicide prevention nurses                              | 310,000 |



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