



MENTAL HEALTH IRELAND STRATEGY 2025 – 2027

Educating, Empowering
and Connecting Communities



**Mental Health
Ireland**

MENTAL HEALTH IRELAND STRATEGY 2025 - 2027

Educating, Empowering
and Connecting Communities



CONTENTS

OUR KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS	2
CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING STATEMENT	4
CEO'S ADDRESS	6
WHO IS MENTAL HEALTH IRELAND?	8
• Mission, Vision and Values	10
• How we Work	12
• Our Board	12
• Our Team	12
• Our Work	13
• Recovery	14
• Mental Health Associations	15
• Affiliate Partnerships	15
• Community Development	16
• Volunteering with Mental Health Ireland	18
• What do we mean by Community?	18
OUR APPROACH	19
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS	20
• Language	23
• Context of our work	24
• How are we going to do this?	25
• PRIORITY AREAS	28
• Evaluation of our Strategy	33
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	34
KEY RESOURCES - LINKS AND REFERENCES	35

Our Key Terms and Definitions



Wellbeing is present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.

(World Health Organization, 2001)

Mental health is an essential part of being human and our overall wellbeing. It helps us handle everyday stress, find purpose and meaning in our lives, learn new things, build good relationships, and deal with challenges in a healthy way. It also plays a big role in helping people, families, and communities thrive.

(Mental Health Ireland, 2025)



Lived Experience

Mental Health Ireland use the term lived experience to describe individuals who experience or have experienced mental health difficulties or challenges. It emphasises that those who have directly faced such challenges possess valuable insights and wisdom that can contribute to better understanding, support, and solutions. Other terms can also be used such as participant or stakeholder.

Coproduction

At Mental Health Ireland, we believe everyone's experiences matter, especially those who have personal experience with mental health challenges. Coproduction/ cocreation is how we put this belief into practice. It's a process where people work together, sharing their experiences to create solutions that benefit everyone. This approach makes sure every voice is heard, respected, and valued from start to finish.

Mental Health Services

Mental health services include professional support systems, based in hospitals and community settings, for diagnosing, treating, and managing mental health challenges and emotional wellbeing. They include therapy, counselling, psychiatric care, crisis intervention, and rehabilitation, provided by licensed professionals.

Trauma-Informed

Trauma-informed refers to Mental Health Ireland's approach to mental health services and supports, recognising the impact of trauma and its role in recovery. It involves identifying signs of trauma, integrating trauma awareness into policies and practices, and ensuring responses support healing. This approach also aims to prevent re-traumatisation by services and supports inadvertently re-enacting traumatic dynamics.

Recovery

In mental health, recovery can mean different things to different people, with clinical recovery referring to the absence of psychiatric symptoms and functioning well (socially in school, college, or work) and personal recovery meaning achieving a meaningful and satisfactory life according to your own preferences and values.

Recovery is unique to each person. What matters most is what recovery means to you. There is no defined period for recovery and everyone's experience of recovery is unique. The recovery journey can involve discovering personal resourcefulness by developing strategies and ways to navigate, cope with, and overcome psychological distress.

People with lived experience describe recovery as empowerment, meeting responsibilities, exercising citizenship; self-determination and choice; hope, optimism for the future; identity beyond mental health challenges, connectedness, social integration, and inclusion; healing from psychological pain and adversity; and feeling that life has coherence, significance, and purpose.

Family Recovery

When all members of the family are supported and empowered, alongside the person who is experiencing the mental health challenge, then there are better opportunities for whole Family Recovery. Family Recovery is about re-establishing roles, goals, ambitions, and lives. It is about learning to maintain our wellbeing and resilience so that we can continue to support our family member's recovery.

Recovery Education

Recovery Education is an adult learning approach that supports people with mental health challenges, their families/supporters, and professionals in understanding and managing recovery through coproduction and co-facilitation. It emphasises empowerment, self-agency, and personal growth; working alongside and in partnership with therapeutic treatment; helping individuals develop coping strategies, build hope, and experience social inclusion.

By providing a flexible, strengths-based learning environment, it equips people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate their mental health journey. Through transformative learning, it fosters hope, control, and opportunity, enabling people to reframe their experiences and take charge of their recovery.

Empowerment

Empowerment in mental health means supporting people to access the choices, tools, knowledge, and support they need to take control of their mental wellbeing and recovery.

Connect Café

Connect Cafés are organised events that bring people together to connect and start conversations. Their goal is to open conversations, strengthening the connection with us, with others and with our communities.



Hugh Kane, Chairperson

Chairperson's Opening Statement

As the Chairperson of Mental Health Ireland, I have the privilege of overseeing the development and implementation of the new Strategic Plan for 2025-2027, *'Educating, Empowering and Connecting Communities'*.

This is the second Strategic Plan that has been developed in my time as both a Board member and now Chairperson. The new plan builds on the work of the previous plan and positions us well strategically to move forward.

The focus of the plan is about the community and how we can all play our part in making communities thrive. Mental Health Ireland has played a substantial role in animating the national policies such as *'Sharing the Vision'* over the years. With the launch of the new National Mental Health Promotion Plan, *'Pathways to Wellbeing'*, we are well positioned to continue that implementation process through our new Strategic Plan.

As a national charity, our work would not be possible without the partnerships and relationships that we have built up over the years. This new Strategic Plan will enable us to focus on those relationships and to strengthen them.

As part of the strategic planning process, we took the opportunity to review our Mission, Vision and Values. Our refreshed mission and vision highlight the importance of having a clear direction and focus and keeping our values at the heart of everything that we do.

I believe that we can be very positive about the future. At all levels we incorporate the experience, strengths and hopes of people with lived experience so that our work continues to make a tangible difference.

We engage and learn from local communities, so we mobilise their inherent strengths and support them to thrive. We greatly appreciate the trust and encouragement invested by the Health Service Executive in Mental Health Ireland's work.

I would like to thank all the people who worked in coproduction and helped us build this new exciting Strategy and I know that we can fulfil its promise of **Educating, Empowering and Connecting Communities**.

Hugh Kane

Chairperson, Board of Directors

Mental Health Ireland





Welcome to the Mental Health Ireland Strategic Plan 2025-2027 '*Educating, Empowering and Connecting Communities*'.

Developing a new Strategy is an exciting, challenging and time-consuming process for any organisation. It presents an opportunity to press pause and to take the time to reflect on our work, on who we are, what our values are and why we do what we do. It encourages conversations about the very core of who we are as a charity, how we define ourselves and what we are aspiring to do in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Educating for Mental Health Ireland is about widening the understanding of mental health and wellbeing in Ireland. For us it means, creating space for conversations, opening our minds to the concept of mental health and wellbeing. We will continue to explore what that means not just for each of us personally, but in our communities, education spaces, workspaces and relationships. Education for me has been at the core of my work over the past 30 years and is one of my core values. For me, education is about listening, learning, opening ourselves to concepts, ideas and knowledge that we may not have been exposed to before. It is about not getting stuck on one set of ideas and allowing room for change, for growth and evolution. Learning as an adult is a transformative space and in Mental Health Ireland educating embodies the concept of transformation and leaving room for all the possibilities that can come from that transformative learning.

Empowering is not a new concept for Mental Health Ireland. By focussing on empowering as a core tenet to our work and our identity,

we are making a very powerful statement about our intentionality in the mental health and wellbeing space. To empower means to encourage and support the ability of someone to do something and this is a critical role for us in our work. We are not a service provider and as such we 'don't do' for others, instead we encourage and support, we empower people to 'do' for themselves. This principle is at the heart of the recovery principles and as a recovery focussed organisation it is central to our work.

Connecting Communities for Mental Health Ireland ties into the work that we do locally through our Development Officers and through our member organisations including the network of Mental Health Associations that we work with on a national basis. These connections with volunteers and communities are ones that we are keen to grow further and to ensure that we have visibility at every level of our work. As a non-governmental organisation (NGO), we know that we thrive when we work in partnership with others. This is another statement of intent when we look to the future and our strategic focus. Through connecting with others, we can find the way towards hope and ensure that we have meaningful engagement with others.

When we look at the amount of growth in Mental Health Ireland during 2024, we can see the changed environment and context within which the strategic planning process has taken place. The process of coproduction provided opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations with so many people about the work that we do in Mental Health Ireland. The coproduction process provided time for us to reflect on the work of the previous strategic plan and to look at the achievements that

had taken place during the lifetime of that Strategy. Taking the time to reflect and listen was an important part of the coproduction process and has enabled us to produce what we feel is a well-rounded, focused, achievable and hopeful Strategy for the next three years.

In addition, we reached out to the public to ask them what they know of our work, what they think we do well and how we can improve on this. This process provided us with a wealth of information and gave us plenty to consider with regards to the new Strategy and what we want to achieve.

As an organisation, the concepts of human rights and a trauma-informed approach were fundamental tenets of our previous Strategy, '*Mental Health for all: Hope, Strength and Action*'. Our commitment to these two defining tenets is such that we will be incorporating trauma-informed training and the WHO QualityRights e-training on mental health for every individual team member throughout the organisation in 2025. Once all existing team members have completed this training, every new team member will be required to complete this training and the WHO QualityRights e-training on mental health as part of their induction to the organisation. This is a commitment that I am making as CEO and highlights the centrality of the human rights-based and trauma-informed approach to our work.

This new Strategy covers the period from 2025 to 2027 which includes the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Mental Health Ireland as a charity. This is a huge milestone for us as an organisation and one that we intend to celebrate in 2026.

Mental Health Ireland is a learning organisation, we will always be evolving, learning and growing. This means that we will not always get things right, but we will always learn from the experience. During the process of developing this Strategy, we looked at the information that we gathered through the coproduction work, the regional Connect Cafés, the public responses and listening to our staff and member and affiliate organisations. We explored the language that we use and the importance of listening to people's experiencing of language. From my own experience both professionally and personally, I understand the power of the words we use, how we can both empower and disempower with words. Much thought and discussion has gone into the language that we use throughout the course of this Strategy and into all our new communication tools, including our new website. Language is very much a living and changing entity and what may be acceptable now, may change in time and has changed in the past. Therefore, I accept that the language that we use in this Strategy may not be the language that someone else would choose and that is okay. Our intentions are to be open and transparent in our meaning and non-judgemental in our approach. We will always be learning in this area.

I now invite you to read our Strategic Plan, '*Educating, Empowering and Connecting Communities, 2025-2027*'. As an organisation, we are looking forward to implementing the new Strategy and to all the opportunities and connections that work will bring to us.

Dr Lisa Cuthbert
Chief Executive Officer

Mental Health Ireland



Who is Mental Health Ireland?

Established in 1966, Mental Health Ireland (MHI) is the longest established national mental health charity in Ireland and a leading organisation dedicated to promoting mental health and wellbeing and to supporting people with mental health challenges in their recovery journey. **Mental Health Ireland educates, empowers and connects communities** by delivering evidence-based education and training, campaigns and projects, and resources. We work collaboratively in coproduction and by influencing public policy and practice to foster a more inclusive and supportive society.

Empowering

We deliver national campaigns and projects that support mental health promotion and provide information and resources that empower communities.

We work with the HSE to deliver recovery education, which includes courses that empower individuals to manage their mental health and wellbeing and foster personal recovery.

Educating

We create and distribute resources on mental health, wellbeing and recovery topics such as Stress, Anxiety, Menopause and Family Recovery.

We provide training that empowers people, communities and workplace organisations to prioritise mental health and wellbeing in meaningful ways.

Connecting Communities

We have a team of Development Officers linking with a regional network of member organisations that deliver mental health and wellbeing campaigns and initiatives at grassroots level.

We are an organisation that values partnerships and working in collaboration with a wide community to innovate, foster connections and provide support locally.

Mission, Vision and Values

MISSION

Our Mission is to educate, empower, and connect communities, creating a culture where everyone is treated with respect and supported, especially when our mental health is challenged.

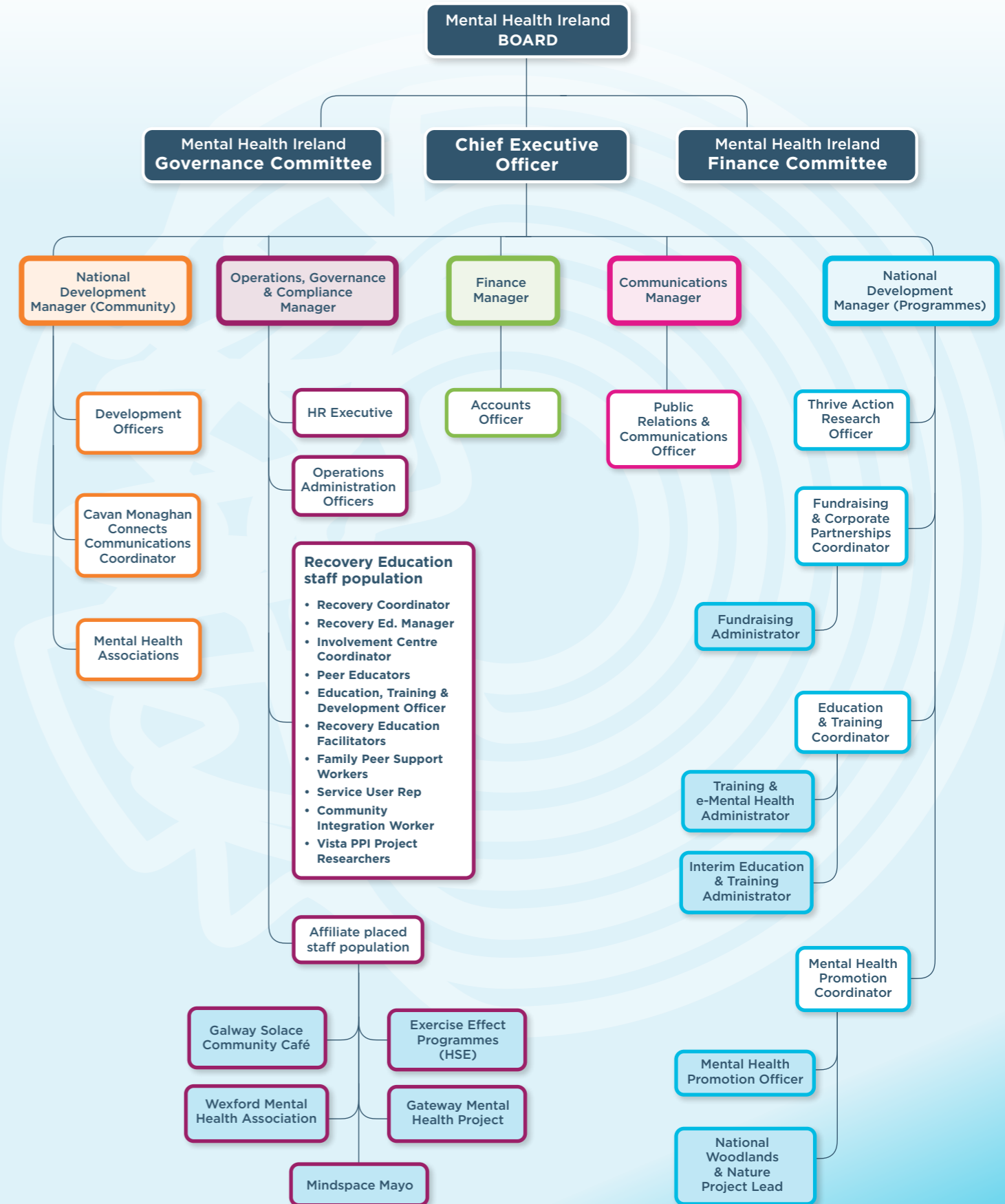
VISION

Our Vision is for an Ireland where mental health is understood, valued and supported as an essential part of everyone's health.

VALUES

- 1. Collaboration:** We recognise the value of working collaboratively and in coproduction to foster connection with and between all communities.
- 2. Integrity:** We are true to our word and put our words into action for the best outcomes for all.
- 3. Innovation:** We are courageous in our innovation and always hold space to learn and grow.
- 4. Empowerment:** We celebrate and recognise the potential of people to support themselves, hold hope and to thrive.

Mental Health Ireland Organisational Chart



How We Work

OUR BOARD

As a charity, we are governed by an experienced Board of Directors, all of whom are volunteers and come with substantial experience in the health sector, education, legal, charity and business sector. Our Board includes members with a wide array of lived/living experience and knowledge and experience of recovery including family recovery. This experience gives them a unique insight into the work of Mental Health Ireland and informs the strategic direction of the organisation. The Board are very clear on the importance of good governance and integrity in leading a charitable organisation.



OUR TEAM



Our multiskilled and dedicated team is made up of:

- Operations, governance and policy
- Finance
- Communications
- Funding and Corporate Engagement
- Mental Health Promotion
- Education and Training
- Human Resources
- Administration
- Development Officers based around the country

OUR WORK

We have a team of Development Officers linking with a regional network of member organisations who deliver mental health campaigns and initiatives at the grassroots level.



The work of our Development Officers team includes:

Supporting Mental Health Ireland and our partners in the coproduction and delivery of national projects and initiatives such as 'Hello, How Are You?', Woodlands for Health, Thrive and Mental Health Month.

Providing guidance and support to the Mental Health Associations in the delivery of local and national initiatives and in the coproduction of strategies and activities.

Working with the Regional Suicide Prevention Officers and supporting the delivery of accredited training programmes.

Actively supporting HSE's Office of Mental Health Engagement & Recovery through their work with Recovery Colleges and Recovery Education services across the country.

Developing and delivering mental health and recovery awareness raising initiatives and training in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations.



RECOVERY

Mental Health Ireland is a recovery focused organisation. We believe that recovery is possible, and all our work is undertaken in alignment with the recovery principles of Connectedness, Hope, Identity, Meaning and Empowerment. (CHIME). We are the leading employer of people with lived experience of mental health challenges nationally.

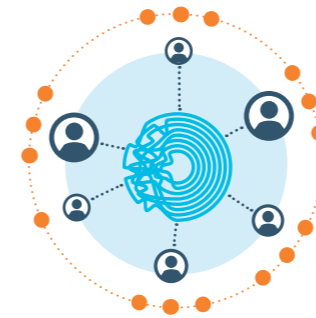
This alignment is evident not only in our own work but also in our strong partnerships with the HSE Mental Health Services nationally, local Integrated Health Areas, Regional Health Areas and through our ongoing working relationship with the National Office of Mental Health Access and Integration (Mental Health Engagement and Recovery). Our recovery focused work helps the HSE to realise goals and objectives contained within national policy at local levels and to innovate and pilot programmes to support evidence-based initiatives within Mental Health Services. This is done through the recruitment and deployment of employees into local roles, based on local needs and requirements. Mental Health Ireland is the leading employer of people working into recovery education services across the country, which requires lived experience and recovery of mental health challenges as an essential expertise for potential candidates for these roles. Recent research found that the personal narrative of recovery using the CHIME framework is effective, leads to higher quality and improved meaning of



life whilst providing cost efficiency within service delivery (Neon, 2024). Mental Health Ireland is proud to be the leading employer in recovery education in Ireland.

Our work in the recovery field goes wider than recovery education. Additionally, we employ people in other recovery orientated roles that operate under specific funding arrangements with HSE Mental Health Services. These include Family Peer Support, Galway Solace Café, Exercise Effect, Vista Research, and Community Health and Wellbeing. Through these funding arrangements and our ongoing partnership with the HSE, our employees occupy an abundance of roles on behalf of local Mental Health Services, including service coordinators, support workers, relief support workers, administrative support workers, research contributors, service user representatives and peer connectors, across a broad range of recovery orientated initiatives in Regional Health Areas.

Our commitment to working in partnership to realise recovery orientated objectives together with the HSE has been critical to the effective roll-out of these services nationally. Mental Health Ireland, through this Strategy, will continue to educate, empower and connect communities by continuing with our recovery focused work.



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATIONS

Across the country, Mental Health Ireland and our team of Development Officers work with a regional network of Mental Health Associations (MHAs). The volunteer-led MHAs have a particular focus on mental health, wellbeing and recovery, including:

- People from the local community
- People with lived experience of mental health challenges
- Family members/carers and professionals working in the mental health area

The activities of a Mental Health Association include:

- The promotion of mental health awareness in communities
- Working with local recovery initiatives such as peer-led day services, Recovery Colleges, Recovery Fairs
- Working alongside our Development Officers in the delivery of national mental health promotion campaigns, projects and training at a local level
- The roll out of other activities and developments in line with our Strategy

AFFILIATE PARTNERSHIPS

As an organisation that values partnerships and working in collaboration to innovate and provide support locally, we collaborate with and support partner organisations across Ireland, including:

- **Mindspace Mayo**
- **Gateway Mental Health Project**
- **Wexford Mental Health Association**
- **Cavan Monaghan Connects**

Affiliate organisations also include the recovery-orientated services mentioned previously.



Community Development

Mental Health Ireland has a team of **Development Officers (DO)** who work across **HSE Regional Health Areas (RHAs)** throughout the country and link with our network of Mental Health Associations (MHA), volunteers and community groups, promoting mental health and supporting recovery in their communities.



The 6 Health Regions cover the following healthcare areas:

HSE Dublin & North East:

- HSE Cavan Monaghan
- HSE Louth Meath
- HSE Dublin North City & West
- HSE Dublin North County

HSE Dublin & Midlands:

- HSE Dublin South City and West
- HSE Dublin South West
- HSE Kildare West Wicklow
- HSE Midlands

HSE Dublin & South East:

- HSE Carlow Kilkenny & Tipperary South
- HSE Waterford Wexford
- HSE Dublin South & Wicklow

HSE West & North West:

- HSE Donegal
- HSE Sligo Leitrim
- HSE Mayo
- HSE Galway Roscommon

HSE Mid West:

- HSE Limerick City & Tipperary North
- HSE Clare & Limerick County

HSE South West:

- HSE Cork North & East
- HSE Kerry
- HSE Cork South & West



VOLUNTEERING WITH MENTAL HEALTH IRELAND

The work that we do in Mental Health Ireland would not be possible without the commitment of the volunteers who support us. We are governed by a Board of Directors, who all volunteer their time, their skills and their energy to ensure that we are able to sustain our work as a charity. Volunteers are the backbone of communities and play a vital role in mental health and wellbeing initiatives at local and national level. Volunteering is a core principle for Mental Health Ireland, and we recognise the benefits that we receive from the work of volunteers. Volunteers work with us as fundraisers, on the delivery of our campaigns and programmes, and through our MHA's.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY?

Mental Health Ireland collaborates with a vast and diverse community of volunteers, groups and teams across the country to educate, empower and connect communities.

Community for Mental Health Ireland is an all-encompassing word, and we use it to capture the breadth and depth of our work within the broader community. Community is about belonging, finding connection and creating meaning. Community includes geography, in terms of where and how we live. Community is about people coming together to create a shared vision, or because we have a shared purpose or a common goal. We come together to share an experience, to use our strengths and vulnerabilities in collaboration with others to make change possible and to be inclusive in the way we live. Being a part of any community means that we all share in the responsibility for empowerment, education and connection for that community. The members of the Mental Health Ireland community are our team, our network and our partners, and we all work together to achieve the vision of creating an Ireland



where mental health is understood, valued and supported as an essential part of everyone's health.

As a charity, Mental Health Ireland doesn't just work within the health community, our work reaches wider as we attempt to address the social determinants of mental health by reaching out into the community as a whole. We believe that by working with every aspect of the community in Ireland, we can effect change and have a positive impact for people through our work.

Our Approach

As a charity that works in the mental health and wellbeing space, it is critical that we are values driven and work within an ethical framework to ensure that the work we do is positive, recovery focused, hopeful and does no harm.

As part of our strategic planning process, we reviewed our core mission, vision and values and they have been updated. We are accountable for our work not only to our funder but to the people who engage with our work and the messages that we want to communicate which can support changes in behaviour that can have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. As a charity we are signed up to the Governance code and are transparent in our reporting to the Board of Directors, have a sustained Triple Lock certification and are fully compliant with all relevant regulations.

Our approach to our work is based on the principles of coproduction, recovery, community development and inclusion. It is important that we take a strengths-based and solutions focused approach to our work. As a national charity we know that the work we do makes a difference and has the ability to impact positively on people's lives. This means that we have a responsibility to ensure that what we do is sustainable and values focused. We have made a commitment as an organisation to being informed, to being trained, to taking a rights-based approach to our work and to never lose sight of the impact of trauma on people and to know that the most basic question that we can ask people is "what happened to you?". This trauma-informed approach means that we have committed our staff to complete training in this area along with the human rights-based training to guarantee that our work remains of a high standard and focused on the importance of these issues in a mental health and wellbeing space.

As a charity, our work must be sustainable, not just in terms of funding, but in terms of the impact that we have on wider society and our commitment to a paperless working environment. Using public transport where possible amongst other initiatives ensures that we don't lose focus of our sustainable agenda.



Strategic Planning Process

1 Steering Group Established

Clarified the overarching purpose and long-term vision.

Conducted a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) & PESTLE analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental).

Coproduction group formed by way of invitation to internal and external stakeholders with a vested interest in MHI Subgroups established.

2 Consultation Process

Internal & external stakeholder involvement;

- Internal MHI Team
- Online survey (x2) open to the general public & external stakeholders
- Regional Connect Cafés (Mullingar, Letterkenny, Limerick, Castlebar and online)

3 Collection of Data

All consultation data gathered to inform the development of themes guide our priority areas.

4 Identify Priority Areas

Prioritised key areas that align with organisational strengths, emerging opportunities, and stakeholder needs.

Defined focus areas that are critical to achieving the vision and mission.

5 Develop Actions

Broke down strategic priorities into actionable initiatives, specifying key activities, responsibilities, timelines and resource requirements. Established metrics to measure progress and determine success, enabling a structured approach to monitor and evaluate the Strategy's impact over time.

6 Finalise & Communicate

Compiled all strategic elements into an accessible document.

7 LAUNCH

March 2025

Launch of the MHI National 3 year Strategy



Strategic Planning Process

The new Strategy has been coproduced in partnership with staff, our member organisations, the Recovery Education team, external partners, volunteers and Board members.

Coproduction is now an embedded practice within the organisation following the work undertaken in the previous Strategy and as you have seen in our key definitions is defined as a collaborative process where service users, families, carers and supporters work with mental health professionals to design, deliver, and evaluate services, combining clinical and lived experience. Our journey to the final Strategy has involved coproduction, consultation, sub-groups and lot of data collection and analysis.

Through our consultation process, we reached out to members of the wider public in addition to inviting people to participate in one of four regional Connect Cafés at the end of 2024. This process combined a **survey** with a focus on **understanding our work, what is working well, what is not working so well and what can we focus on and do better**. These very simple questions answered honestly have given us a depth of knowledge about how our work is seen, an understanding of where it isn't being seen and a clear direction to build on going forward.

As part of the coproduction process, we had five different sub-groups working together on these areas:

- Consultation
- Language
- Data Analysis
- Mission, Vision & Values
- Design

After an enriching process, we have ended with a Strategy that is focused and provides a clear direction for the next three years. It builds on our strengths, acknowledges our challenges and provides a constructive framework to clarify our identity and increase our visibility. By talking with people who aren't familiar with our previous work, we were able to have conversations about our impact, where our work is needed and to look at how we can, not just identify where we need to be, but develop a plan for how to get there.

The structure of the Strategy focuses on three priority areas with three objectives per priority and the actions that fall within those objectives. Through our discussions and many conversations, it became clear that mental health and wellbeing was too big a need to focus on having it as a simple priority. Therefore, the decision was made to have the theme of mental health and wellbeing as a defining and overarching theme for the Strategy and for the organisation. This has resulted in it becoming a consistent objective in each named priority area. In addition, the organisational structure became an underpinning theme throughout the coproduction and consultation process. We have threaded this through each priority area to ensure that we don't lose sight of the need to ensure that we can attain the goals of the current Strategy by ensuring that we have the right fit and the right approach organisationally.

LANGUAGE

The words that we use can shape the world that we see. Language has never felt so delicate and yet so powerful at the same time as it does in the mental health arena. It has been a real learning experience looking at language as part of our strategic planning process and our desire to use language that doesn't label, demean or undermine people's experiences. We also don't want to add to stigma in the mental health world as our goal is to empower, enhance, recognise and contribute to de-stigmatisation.



Our aim is not to silence people when we look at the language that we use, our aim is to encourage dialogue and inclusive discussion and to acknowledge that language is both public and private, it is purposeful and meaningful and can be empowering and disempowering. Mental Health Ireland will always allow for the language that we use to change, grow and evolve. We do that by listening, by coproducing, by being inclusive and creating a safe space for the conversations about language to take place. We will not dictate, our role is not to police anyone's language. Our role as a charity is to facilitate learning and discussion. The language in our Strategy, on our website, in all our documentation, resources, education and training, campaigns etc. is language that we have agreed on, it has been considered and much discussed. It has evolved and as language is a living thing, it will continue to do so. That is ok. As one person has reminded us during this process, our intentions are good in this space. Our learning will be ongoing, and we will always be listening, discussing, engaging and not judging.



CONTEXT OF OUR WORK

Mental Health Ireland is the oldest, national mental health charity in the country. We will be celebrating reaching our 60th anniversary in the middle of this new Strategy. As mentioned earlier, this is an important milestone for us, and we will be taking the opportunity to reflect on our work over the past 60 years. The landscape of mental health in Ireland over the past 60 years has changed. Mental Health Ireland has not only evolved with the landscape, but we have also led the way, and we will continue to do so.

Whilst the landscape has changed, challenges remain. We can still struggle to access services; we can still experience stigma and challenges to our better mental health. Barriers still exist. This is why our reach in Mental Health Ireland must go further and reach wider to ensure that the pathway to mental health and wellbeing remains visible and accessible for all of us.

Our work does not take place in a vacuum. Instead, we work within a tapestry of mental health services and policies, with different local, regional and national demands and are both responsive to the needs and proactive in meeting the needs of communities. We are responsible for implementing the relevant recommendations from the *Sharing the Vision*, national mental health policy. Our primary focus within that policy is in mental health promotion and recovery education.



Connecting for Life



HSE
Mental Health
Engagement
& Recovery

We work locally with *Connecting for Life*, Ireland's national Strategy on suicide reduction, and have seen the importance of collaboration and partnership approaches through this work.

We work in partnership with the **National Office of Mental Health Access and Integration** (Mental Health Engagement and Recovery) on the implementation of the *National Framework for Recovery in Mental Health 2024-2028*.

The end of 2024 saw the publication of *Pathways to Wellbeing*, the national mental health promotion plan, a plan that will be informing our work for the next three years as mental health promotion is at the heart of everything we do.

In 2025-2027, we will also be working within non-health sector policy frameworks to ensure that we are bringing the language of mental health promotion and education and training about understanding our mental health to a wider number of people in every aspect of the community. **Social inclusion** is at the heart of our work and this will be mapped out clearly over the next three years.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO THIS?

Our coproduction and consultation process, saw us reach far and wide and ask a range of questions of a large number of people about their understanding of our work. Our consultation process involved our own internal team, employees from the wider team, member organisations, Board members, affiliates, stakeholder and the wider public. This consultation process resulted in a rich amount of data for us to inform the strategic planning process.

As previously mentioned, within our team and Connect Cafés with members and stakeholders, we focused on:

What is working well?

What can we do better?

What can we focus on in the new Strategic Plan?



In our survey to the public and to our stakeholders, we asked them a wider range of questions, outlined below:

- Mental Health Ireland Survey**
- How familiar are you with the work of Mental Health Ireland?
 - What are the first three words that come to mind when you think of Mental Health Ireland?
 - Which areas of Mental Health Ireland's work are you aware of?
 - What do you think Mental Health Ireland does well?
 - What areas do you think Mental Health Ireland could improve on?
 - What do you think Mental Health Ireland's priorities should be over the next three years?
 - What does mental health mean to you?





The data was analysed through a subgroup of our coproduction group which resulted in us developing three core priority areas.

Mental health and wellbeing were the areas that resulted in the largest amount of data points during the analysis of all the responses from the various consultation processes. Given the repetition of the theme and the fact that it is at the heart of who we are as an organisation and everything we do, we came to the decision that it was too critical a theme to have as a singular priority. Mental health and wellbeing became an overarching theme, and this is reflected by having an objective on mental health and wellbeing in each of the three priorities.

This creative solution resulted in us agreeing three core priority areas with two objectives mirrored in every priority area. We have mental health and wellbeing as the overarching theme and organisational structure underpinning the three priority areas. This is an innovative approach to strategic planning and provides a coherent and consistent Strategy for us to work within.

Our three Priority Areas are:

1 Community, Partnerships and Collaboration

2 Education, Training and Information

3 Identity and Visibility

With further discussion and analysis, it became clear that the theme of **organisational structure** was another foundational theme coming throughout the data. As a charity, it is critical that we don't lose sight of the resources needed to implement a new Strategy. Therefore, it was decided to echo the approach to the mental health and wellbeing theme and ensure that each priority had an objective that focused on **organisational structure** and that we are ensuring our capacity to implement the new Strategy.



PRIORITY AREAS

PRIORITY AREA 1



Community, Partnerships and Collaboration

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)
1 Maintaining a mental health and wellbeing focus in all that we do.	1.1	Ensuring an evidence-based response to community and social needs through investing in our own research.	Sustain a research function within the organisation
	1.2	Collaborating with other organisations and people, and being aligned with national policies.	Positive impact on mental health outcomes within communities.
	1.3	Informing, influencing and implementing policy and practice, locally and nationally by participating at all levels	We are an influential organisation in relation to policy and practice at all levels locally and nationally. (This is evidenced by the breadth and impact of our mental health promotion and Recovery Education programmes; and efforts to enhance Recovery ethos, training, and support within the mental health system).
	1.4	Encouraging opportunities for greater involvement of people with lived experience of mental health challenges and their family members and supporters in the development, design, and delivery of recovery-oriented services	Recognition of the value of coproduction and the importance of diverse, lived experience representation. Continue to be a voice for improved resources, pathways, structures, and supports for lived experience roles within mental health services. Better representation of lived experience in recovery oriented services. Mental Health Ireland has a reputation as the go to agency for coproduction.

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)
2 Strengthen and expand the footprint of our work.	2.1	Developing the network of member organisations through volunteerism, and encouraging participation through consistent collaboration, communication and support.	Regional network of member organisations and partnerships established.
	2.2	Pursuing new connections across different sectors	New connections have been made. New creative work opportunities have emerged.
	2.3	Ensuring representation at relevant local and national statutory and voluntary committees.	Mental Health Ireland have local and national representation.
	2.4	Connecting communities in innovative ways through our campaigns, initiatives, training and education	Visibility of communities engaged in Mental Health and Wellbeing. Development of an e-mental health policy Mental Health Irelands Volunteer Strategy is adopted as a living document to support local volunteerism.
	2.5	Growing partnerships through the further development of a wide range of initiatives	New initiatives developed that build on our existing work. Partnerships' growth is evident. Matched initiatives to partner needs.

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)
3 Our organisational structure - right time, right place, right approach.	3.1	Researching and resourcing funding opportunities to ensure that we can provide the correct response in the areas that we work within.	Sourced funding to match human and programme resources to relevant needs.
	3.2	Using an informed approach to ensure resources are applied effectively	Transparency in all internal and financial controls to ensure effective application of resources.



Education, Training and Information

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)
4 Maintaining a mental health and wellbeing focus in all that we do.	4.1	Ensuring an evidence-based response to community and social needs through investing in our own research.	Developed a quality assurance framework Implemented a quality assurance framework All new training is co-produced and existing training reviewed is co-adapted Conducted a review of the Education and Training programmes
	4.2	Continuing to use the principles of recovery and the voice of lived experience in our work	Embedded principles of recovery in the quality assurance framework The voice of lived experience is represented through coproduction Have a module on Recovery for new and existing staff and volunteers
	4.3	Strategically collaborating with relevant educational institutions to enhance mental health and wellbeing practices	SOAR analysis is developed A plan to formalise working with relevant educational institutions to enhance mental health and wellbeing practices

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)
5 Empower and inform people through Mental Health Promotion, Education and Training	5.1	Developing and implementing a quality assurance framework.	Analysis of where MHI work fits within an education quality framework.
	5.2	Developing and delivering evidence based mental health promotion programmes for workplaces and communities that align to national policy	Positive impact on mental health outcomes Greater access to evidence-based programmes
	5.3	Facilitating the ongoing provision of Recovery Education through the employment of people with lived experience of mental health challenges, their family members and supporters	Improved awareness of the value of Recovery Education and engagement with programmes Strengthened Recovery partnerships
	5.4	Continuing to promote the possibility of recovery through recovery principles	Recovery principles are visible in all our work
	5.5	Being the go-to organisation for evidence based, coproduced and accessible mental health promotion literature and resources	Increased usage and engagement with MHI website Increased engagement in our high quality, accessible and coproduced literature and resources

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)
6 Our organisational structure - right time, right place, right approach	6.1	Providing opportunities for income generation through training and education offerings	Increased revenue stream
	6.2	Growing our internal resources to ensure we can continue to be leaders in the provision of information, education and training in mental health	We are identified as a leader in the provision of mental health and wellbeing education and training. Strengthened resources within the organisation.
	6.3	Sourcing opportunities for continued professional development across the organisation where appropriate	Mental Health Ireland has a multi-skilled team. All employees avail and have access to current /up to date skill development opportunities. Mental Health Ireland invests in professional development as an important component for staff wellbeing



Identity and Visibility

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)
7 Maintaining a mental health and wellbeing focus in all that we do.	7.1	Raising the profile of Mental Health Ireland through our national and local mental health campaigns and programmes	Enhanced public perception, knowledge and awareness of Mental Health Ireland Stronger relationship with stakeholders Mental Health Ireland have local and national committee representation.
	7.2	Increasing awareness and engagement in our work to improve the mental health and wellbeing of individuals	Strengthened participation in our work Impact on better mental health and wellbeing outcomes

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)
8 Enhancing our visibility as a recovery focused, awareness raising and stigma reducing organisation.	8.1	Being a visible organisation with a strong brand identity through focused work and targeted messaging	Clear and strong public recognition Clear and strong internal recognition.
	8.2	Developing and delivering evidence based mental health promotion programmes for workplaces and communities that align to national policy	Clear understanding and alignment to relevant national policies that contribute to our work within workplaces and communities. We have a suite of evidence-based mental health promotion programmes for use in workplaces and communities.
	8.3	Being a change agent and reducing stigma by widening conversations through education and mental health promotion	Model evidence-based recovery principles in our training, education, and mental health promotion offerings. Engaged new audiences in conversations reduce stigma and increase awareness.

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)
9 Our organisational structure - right time, right place, right approach	9.1	Investing in our communications, marketing and PR infrastructure	Well-resourced and effective marketing, PR and communication plans are in place. Strong brand recognition, engagement and visibility.
	9.2	Ensuring we have an effective and well-resourced fundraising plan.	Well-resourced and effective fundraising plans are in place. Increased unrestricted income from fundraising gains.
	9.3	Guaranteeing good governance and compliance with all legislation through ethical and transparent practices	Have a future-proofed and sustainable organisation. Public confidence in Mental Health Ireland.

EVALUATION OF OUR STRATEGY

For Mental Health Ireland, the value of having a robust Strategic Plan is not just in setting our goals and direction for the next three years, but in enabling us to assess our progress against those goals.

The Strategy evaluation process helps us to answer questions such as;

How much progress have we made towards our vision?

Which of our objectives have we completed successfully?

Which objectives need to be changed or are no longer needed?

Our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan will be broken down into operational plans to encompass all our work that will be reviewed and reported on an annual basis within the Mental Health Ireland Annual Report. Through this process we will have an opportunity to track, monitor and measure our impact. This is a critical part of any Strategic Plan.

Acknowledgements

Mental Health Ireland acknowledges the participation of all members of the Strategy coproduction group and subgroups, without whom the creation of this Strategy would not have been possible. Thank you!

Dr Lisa Cuthbert, CEO Mental Health Ireland, Strategy Coproduction & Steering Group Lead.

Alessia Gallo, Mental Health Promotion Officer, Mental Health Ireland. Analysing Data subgroup member.

Ann Sheridan, Trustee Board Member, Mental Health Ireland. Analysing Data & Language subgroup member.

Bill Vaughan, Development Officer, Donegal, Mental Health Ireland.

Carmen Bryce, Communications Manager, Mental Health Ireland. Design subgroup lead & Mission Vision and Values subgroup member and Steering Group member

Caroline Brogan, Development Officer, North Dublin, Kildare & West Wicklow, Mental Health Ireland Design subgroup member and Steering Group member.

Cillian Keane, Development Officer, Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary, Mental Health Ireland.

Conor Geoghegan, National Development Manager (Community), Mental Health Ireland. Consultation subgroup Co-lead & Mission Vision and Values subgroup member and Steering Group member

Donal Hoban, Service Reform Lead, Mental Health Services, Community Healthcare West

Donal O’Keeffe, Recovery Coordinator, ARCHES Recovery College, Language subgroup member

Gina Delaney, Development Officer, Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford and South Tipperary, Mental Health Ireland. Analysing Data & Language subgroups member

Grace O’Donnell, Student Intern, Limerick Mental Health Association

Ian Conboy, Exercise Effect Coordinator, Dublin North City and County Mental Health Services

Ian Hackett, Manager, Limerick Mental Health Association

Jasmine Walsh, Student Intern, Limerick Mental Health Association.

Jo Donohoe, National Development Manager (Programmes), Mental Health Ireland. Consultation subgroup Co-lead, Language subgroup lead, Mission Vision and Values subgroup member and Steering Group member.

John Ward, Secretary, Galway Mental Health Association, Consultation subgroup member.

Maria Walsh Healy, Operations Governance & Compliance Manager, Mental Health Ireland. Analysing Data subgroup lead and Steering Group member.

Marie Duffy, PR and Communications Officer, Mental Health Ireland. Language & Mission Vision and Values & Design subgroups member.

Noel Hoare, Family Peer Support Worker, HSE West Mental Health Services.

Noeleen Wills, Development Officer, South Dublin, East Wicklow, Mental Health Ireland. Mission Vision and Values subgroup lead, language subgroup member, and Steering Group member.

Paula Lowney, Senior Health Promotion & Improvement Officer, HSE Waterford Wexford Integrated Health Area.

Peter Byrne, Peer Educator, ARCHES Recovery College.

Rita Kelly, Chairperson, Carlow Mental Health Association.

Ryan Ulrich, Fundraising Coordinator, Mental Health Ireland.

Tara Gibbons, Interim Recovery Coordinator, Midlands Louth Meath Recovery Education Services, Analysing Data subgroup member.

Viola Di Bucchianico, Thrive Action Researcher, Mental Health Ireland. Analysing Data & Language subgroups member.

In addition to everyone listed above, we want to acknowledge and thank the participants of each consultation group, Connect Café and online survey participants. We were delighted at the level of engagement and participation by everyone. Consultation happened pre and post draft writing and this process allowed us to ensure we were hearing all stakeholder voices and that we produced a strategic plan that aligns with our values, is well informed and strengthens our culture of community and collaboration. Thank you for taking the time to be part of this strategic planning journey, the Strategy is stronger for your input.

Key Resources – Links and References

All Ireland Standards for Community Work

<https://www.cwi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/All-Ireland-Standards-for-Community-Work.pdf>

A National Framework for Recovery (2024 –2028)

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/mental-health-engagement-and-recovery/resources-information-and-publications/a-national-framework-for-recovery-in-mental-health.pdf>

CHIME Principles (2011)

Williams, J., et al. “Measures of the Recovery Orientation of Mental Health Services: Systematic Review.”

Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, vol. 47, no. 11, 2012, pp. 1827-1835. DOI: 10.1007/s00127-012-0484-y.

Connecting for Life (2015-2024)

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/strategy-implementation/about-connecting-for-life/>

European Framework for Action on Mental Health 2021–2025

<https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289057813>

Healthy Ireland A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing (2013-2025)

www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/7555/62842eef4b13413494b13340fff9077d.pdf#page=null

Healthy Ireland Implementation plan (2023-2027)

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/healthy-ireland/hse-health-services-healthy-ireland-implementation-plan-2023-2027.pdf>

Citizens defining citizenship: A model grounded in lived experience and its implications for research, policy and practice. Health & Social Care in the Community, 30(3).

MacIntyre, G., Cogan, N., Stewart, A., Quinn, N., O’Connell, M., & Rowe, M. (2022).

<https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.13440>

Mental Health Act (2001)

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2001/act/25/enacted/en/html>

National Mental Health Research Strategy, Health Research Board 2024

<https://assets.gov.ie/314397/b2fa5db8-b052-4dee-a861-f9f1507d1952.pdf>

O’Keeffe, D., Sheridan, A., Kelly, A., Doyle, R., Madigan, K., Lawlor, E., & Clarke, M. (2018).

‘Recovery’ in the real world: service user experiences of mental health service use and recommendations for change 20 years on from a first episode psychosis. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 45(4), 635-648.

Pathways to Wellbeing – National Mental Health Promotion Plan 2024–2030

<https://assets.gov.ie/314724/dfd1c1f8-8e1b-4683-a14b-c5772153c8e4.pdf>

Poetry – Margaret J. Wheatley. (n.d.).

<https://margaretwheatley.com/library/poetry>

Sharing the Vision (2020 - 2030)

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/mentalhealth/sharing-the-vision>

Slade et al., on behalf of the NEON study group (2024)

Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of online recorded recovery narratives in improving quality of life for people with non-psychotic mental health problems: a pragmatic randomized controlled trial

World Psychiatry, 23, 101-112

<https://www.researchintorecovery.com/7544-2/>

Slainte Care (2018)

<https://assets.gov.ie/9914/3b6c2faf7ba34bb1a0e854cfa3f9b5ea.pdf>

Stronger Together: The HSE Mental Health Promotion Plan 2022-2027

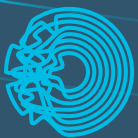
<https://hsehealthandwellbeingnews.com/stronger-together-the-hse-mental-health-promotion-plan-2022-2027>

World Health Organization. (2019).

WHO QualityRights e-training on mental health.

<https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/policy-law-rights/gr-e-training>





**Mental Health
Ireland**

MENTAL HEALTH IRELAND

Educating, Empowering and Connecting Communities

Second Floor, Marina House, 11-13 Clarence Street,
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, A96 E289

01 284 1166

info@mentalhealthireland.ie

www.mentalhealthireland.ie

 @mentalhealthireland

 Mental.Health.Ireland

 mental-health-ireland

 @MentalHealthIreland