

MOVING MENTAL HEALTH FORWARD IN THE IRISH PROBATION SERVICE

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6 APRIL 2022



INTRODUCTION

- Mental Health Research
- Mental Health Strategy
- High Level Task Force on Mental Health and Addiction

RESEARCH:

‘Moving Forward Together: Mental Health Among Persons Supervised by the Probation Service’

Dr Christina Power, March 2021

KEY FINDINGS:

- At least 40% of adults on a Probation supervision order present with symptoms indicative of at least one mental health problem, compared to 18.5% of the general population.
- Approximately 50% of all adults supervised by the Probation Service that present with mental health problems also present with one or more of the following issues:
 - Alcohol and/or drug misuse (51%)
 - Difficult family relationships (49%)
 - Accommodation instability (47%)

KEY FINDINGS CONT'D:

- There are significant and unmet psychological and psychiatric need among persons subject to Probation supervision.
- We need improved access and engagement routes to mental health services
- There is a need for cross agency working and a focused government approach to ensure this can happen.

KEY FINDINGS CONT'D:

- 43% experience Active symptoms of mental health problems (57%women; 40% men)
- 10% experience severe and enduring mental health problems
- 30% are engaged with a service for Mental Health Assessment and/or intervention (49% women; 28% men)
- 56% have had some form of Mental Health Assessment/intervention in the past.
 - Most often through GP/Medication
 - 11% have had in-patient Psychiatric Care in the past

KEY FINDINGS CONT'D

- 10% of people supervised by the Probation Service were actively experiencing suicidal ideation (16% women; 8% men)
- 41% have had a known Mental Health Diagnosis provided by a qualified clinician (52% women; 38% men)
 - 16% anxiety disorder and 15% mood disorder
 - 8% Schizophrenia (compared to 1% general population)
 - 4% personality disorder and related traits. Very low compared to other Probation Service jurisdictions (e.g. 47%). Personality disorder is **not** recognised in the Irish Mental Health Act 2001.

KEY ISSUES:

- There are significant unmet psychological and psychiatric needs among those persons subject to Probation Supervision and limited Mental Health Service engagement.
- There is a need to strengthen knowledge and further develop skills-based training in mental health.
- There is a need to improve and strengthen Probation Service engagement with mainstream primary care and forensic and community mental health service providers and the development of joined-up strategies and interventions.

MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY (FLOWING FROM DR POWER'S RECOMMENDATIONS)

- Development of a Probation Service Mental Health Engagement and Support Strategy that will build on the current findings and can be implemented nationally and locally.
- There is a need for stronger links in supporting client's engagement with services and in developing multi-disciplinary partnerships and active working with mental health professionals.
- Provide mental health skills training for Probation Officers.
- Develop a tailored approach to addressing the mental health needs of clients engaged with the Probation Service.

STRATEGY CONT'D

- Provide support to staff who are managing complex and challenging cases where mental health is a significant concern.
- Review and revise current systems for recording deaths of persons on Probation Service supervision (suicide prevention training).
- Conduct further mental health research (e.g. experience of minorities, Traveller community etc; explore mental health needs from client's perspective).

STRATEGY CONT'D

- Support the Probation Service to become a more trauma informed organisation.
- Work more collaboratively with the health services around the area of substance misuse/dual diagnosis.
- Develop a better understanding and recognition as personality disorder as an issue.

HIGH LEVEL TASK FORCE FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

- Develop a more collaborative and cohesive strategy for engaging with individuals presenting with mental health and/or addiction issues who come into contact with the criminal justice system.
 - Dept of Justice
 - Dept of Health
 - Dept of Youth Affairs
 - An Garda Siochana (police)
 - The Probation Service
 - Irish Prison Service
 - Health Service Executive

HIGH LEVEL TASK FORCE

- Garda (police) Diversion
- Community
 - Court
 - Community Supervision
 - Transition from custody
- Custody/Forensic Inpatient (severe and enduring)

HLTF due to report findings in Q2 2022

Thank You!