

Mental health services for young people

Youth mental health is the focus of a number of agencies and services. Some of these are outlined below and links are provided to others.

Headstrong

Headstrong is a new initiative with a stated mission to empower communities to support young people in Ireland aged between 12 and 25 years to achieve better mental health and wellbeing. The following information is taken from their website:

Youth mental health is a term that refers to the mental and emotional wellbeing of young people during the developmental phase of the journey into adulthood. Mental health issues are the main health concern of young people in Ireland and addressing these issues with early and appropriate help makes a huge difference to the lives of young people and their families.

Youth is the peak period of incidence for mental health problems, yet in Ireland it is where supports and services are most lacking

International and Irish studies indicate that psychological disturbances exist in up to 20% of adolescents and 2% of the total adolescent population has moderate to severe disabling conditions such as major psychiatric disorders.

A major Irish study found that at least one in four Irish teenagers have experienced serious personal, emotional, behavioural or mental health problems, and almost 1 in 10 deliberately harm themselves.

Ireland currently has the 5th highest rate of youth suicide (age 14-24) in the EU, with 90% of suicides linked to mental health difficulties.

Effective treatments can help more than 70% of people afflicted with anxiety and depression (the most common mental health problems). Early intervention has been shown to have a high success rate for bipolar disorder, anorexia nervosa and has also been shown to benefit young people with schizophrenia, reducing the severity of the illness and leading to better adaptation to the disorder. Investing in the mental health of young people represents the most cost-effective action to prevent the continuous increase of mental health problems in all age groups. Our understanding of effective treatment needs to move beyond the concept of recovery as "getting rid of a disorder" to one that can instil positive values and behaviours that enable young people to flourish, contribute to society, and be happy and healthy.

Headstrong does not provide mental health and wellbeing services to young people but rather works with those who do - including Government, youth and health services, philanthropy organisations, academic institutions, community leaders, NGOs and young people themselves. It seeks to achieve its mission by building community understanding and confidence about youth mental health issues and by assisting

communities to provide better support to young people who going through tough times.

Headstrong is an independent, non-profit organisation that is supported by a mixture of philanthropic and Government funding. It is led by Dr. Tony Bates and can be accessed through its website www.headstrong.ie.

DETECT

DETECT is a pilot early intervention for psychosis service operating in South County Dublin and Wicklow. It aims to provide an effective Irish model of early intervention for people with first episode psychosis informed by international developments in evidence based healthcare. It is hoped that, in time, the pilot will prove effective in helping people with a first episode psychosis and provide guidance as to how early intervention can roll out everywhere in Ireland.

At the moment it provides a service for individuals experiencing first episode psychosis and their families living in the catchment areas of Cluain Mhuire, Elm Mount, Newcastle and St John of God Hospital services. DETECT envisages that services for people with psychosis will be delivered at the earliest possible opportunity and will be tailored to suit the individual needs of the person and their family.

Recognising and treating medical conditions early makes as much sense for mental health conditions as it does for physical illnesses. Due to the alarming periods of time people with psychosis go untreated (on average 1-2 years) early intervention services for psychosis have been developed internationally and continue to grow. The World Health Organisation suggests that in mental health "Early intervention is fundamental in preventing progress towards a full-blown disease, in controlling symptoms and improving outcomes".

Recognising psychosis early is vital to the success of the specialised treatment package that is developed for the individual. By carrying out public education and setting up early intervention teams, treatment delays have been reduced by more than 50% in a number of countries and DETECT is hoping to eventually achieve similar results in Ireland.

The first 3 - 5 years after the onset of psychosis is known as the "critical period". The objective of early intervention during this period is recovery. Recovery can be broken into (1) the remission of symptoms and (2) recovery in areas like work, leisure and self confidence. Interventions to maximise recovery in the early phase of psychosis are offered in early interventions services. These include psychological and family programmes.

Once the person has recovered, the early intervention team help with the smooth transition from the specialist service back to primary care or on to a community mental health service if necessary. In the DETECT model the person always remains

under the care of the community mental health team and no transfer of care is required.

More information about DETECT can be found on its website www.detect.ie.

Some other services offering support in the area of mental health

- [Aware \(www.aware.ie\)](http://www.aware.ie) - Helping to defeat depression
- [Bodywhys \(www.bodywhys.ie\)](http://www.bodywhys.ie) - The Eating Disorders Association Of Ireland
- [GROW \(www.grow.ie\)](http://www.grow.ie) - Helping people to help themselves
- [Mental Health Ireland \(www.mentalhealthireland.ie\)](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie) - Supporting positive mental health
- [Samaritans \(http://www.samaritans.org.uk/talk/branches/ireland.shtm\)](http://www.samaritans.org.uk/talk/branches/ireland.shtm) - 24 hours a day, confidential emotional support
- [Schizophrenia Ireland \(www.sirl.ie\)](http://www.sirl.ie) - The Lucia Foundation
- [Spun-Out \(www.spunout.ie\)](http://www.spunout.ie) – Irish youth health, media, information and activism

Some organisations that can provide useful additional information relevant to youth mental health in Ireland

- [3Ts](#)
- [Central Statistics Office Ireland](#)
- [Department of Health & Children](#)
- [Foroige](#)
- [Health Promotion Ireland](#)
- [Health Service Executive](#)
- [Irish Mental Health Coalition](#)
- [Mental Health Commission](#)
- [National Youth Council of Ireland](#)