

# Mental Health

## A Community Crisis

a discussion document on Mental Health  
services and attitudes in West Waterford



published by

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## Introduction

Positive mental health is a vital part of our overall health and wellbeing as humans. It impacts on how we function as individuals and how we interact with others throughout our lives.

Positive mental health is not only a personal goal, but should be a community objective as well. As we strive to build thriving communities in a healthy society, we need to pay attention to mental health as well as to physical health.

Unfortunately we are experiencing a quiet crisis in communities across Ireland. This is also the case in West Waterford. Access to adequate and timely mental health services is not assured, and there are gaps in service provision. Our health service is under-resourced as a whole. Community and voluntary organisations do trojan work to fill the gaps in services and outreach, often times without any state support.

Children and young people in crisis are being forced to wait months or years to receive care, and adults experiencing mental ill-health are routinely ignored by a system that is under-resourced, understaffed and not fit for purpose. Nearly 3,000 children are awaiting their first appointment for mental health care.

Workers in our healthcare system are swamped, overworked and underpaid. There is a crisis in recruitment and retention and many key posts remain unfilled. In 2018 the Mental Health Commission labelled the system as “unsafe and substandard” in a report on mental health services in the country.

Economic and social factors have an impact on mental health and wellbeing. Anxiety and stress as a result of financial pressure, debt, employment issues, housing insecurity and homelessness are leading to mental ill-health or

exacerbating existing conditions. Similarly, delays in accessing medical treatment, or a shortage of educational or social supports can have a negative impact on mental health and wellbeing. The full impact of the housing crisis and the austerity decade on parents and children may never be fully known.

Suicide and self-harm are on the increase. There are few communities in the country that have not been devastated by suicide in recent years. Last year alone 70 school going children died by suicide in the state, a figure which excludes 16-18 years olds who are school goers.

This document will outline the services available to people in West Waterford and identify the gaps in service provision. It will discuss attitudes to mental health locally, and suggest proactive steps that can be taken locally to address shortcomings and strengthen our response to the crisis.

# Services

Waterford City and County has a total population of 116,176 according to the 2016 census, and West Waterford, comprising the Dungarvan and Lismore municipal district has a population of 31,221. Waterford forms part of the HSE administrative region known as CHO 5, which has a population of 511,070.

Mental Health services in Waterford can be divided into statutory services provided by the HSE and services provided by community and voluntary organisations. In addition General Practice remains the first port of call for people concerned about mental health issues and there are many trained and accredited counsellors and psychotherapists operating private practices across Waterford City and County.

## Statutory Mental Health Services

Statutory mental health services in Waterford are provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) as part of its Community Health Organisation 5 (CHO 5), which covers the South East region.

Statutory services are provided at nine sites across the City and County.

- Waterford Mental Health Services [UHW]
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) [UHW]
- The Suicide Resource Office [UHW]
- Psychiatry of Later Life [UHW]
- Ard na Déise Residence [Waterford]
- The Community Homes [Waterford]
- Brook House Community Mental Health Centre [Waterford]
- Springmount Residence [Dungarvan]
- Lismore Day Centre [Lismore]

Further details in [Appendix 3](#).

There are only two statutory services with a mental health remit in West Waterford.

The bulk of services are located in the City and there is no Community Mental Health Centre located in West Waterford.

As of November 2018 the South/South West Hospital Group employed only two psychologists. There are just 5 resource officers for suicide attached employed in the CHO 5 area according to the National Office for suicide Prevention annual report 2017. Figures uncovered by David Cullinane TD show that staffing levels have decreased in CAMHS at University Hospital Waterford (UHW). As of November 2018 there is one consultant psychiatrist, one senior registrar, two clinical psychologists, and 1.8 equivalent nursing positions.

A report published last month by the Mental Health Commission has found that the inpatient mental health facility at UHW has been 'critically non-compliant' with regulations relating to the use of seclusion and the maintenance of records. The report gave the facility a 'high risk' rating for privacy, premises, registration and staffing standards. The report also found that not all staff at the facility had received the 'required training in basic life support, aggression and violence management, and on the 2001 Mental Health Act'.

## **Community and Voluntary Mental Health Services**

There is a range of community and voluntary services available in the Waterford City and County, some of which receive some state support. These services fall broadly into three categories:

1. Local organisations which are specific to the Waterford area.
2. National organisations that have an 'on-the-ground' presence in the area (both as independent organisations and as 'branches' directly coordinated by national organisations).
3. National services that have online or telephone services that can be accessed by people in the Waterford area.

The list below provides an overview of organisations that fall into the first and second of these categories and map outlines their location. Only two of the services are based in West Waterford.

- AWARE (depression and bipolar disorder support) [Waterford]
- Barardos (family support project) [Dungarvan]
- Bodywhys (support for people affected by eating disorders) [Waterford]
- Family Resource Centres [Waterford]
- Focus Ireland (homelessness support) [Waterford]
- GROW (Community mental health) [Waterford & Dungarvan]
- Laochas (youth mental health) [Waterford]
- Pieta House (suicide and self-harm prevention) [Waterford]
- Samaritans (listening service) [Waterford]
- Shine (empowerment and social change) [Waterford]
- Shona Project (positive mental health for girls) [Waterford]
- Waterford Mental Health Association [Waterford]

Further details in [Appendix 3](#).

This list is not exhaustive; there are other relevant national organisations whose remit is more broadly conceived than mental health, and there may be other small locally based organisations whose remit is relevant to mental health.

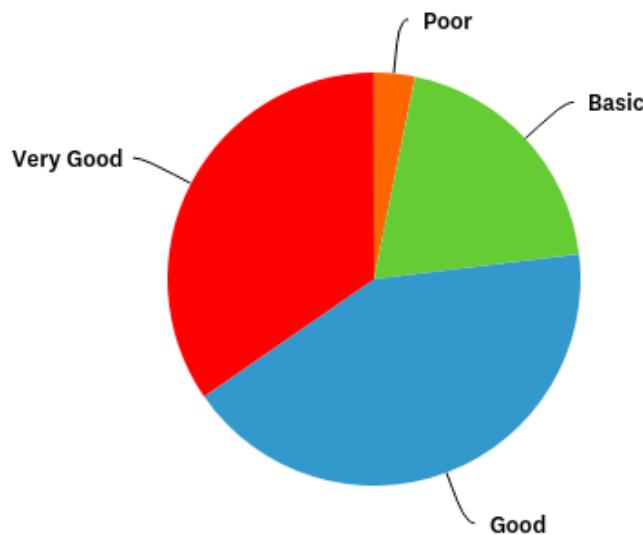
Community and voluntary organisations strive to fill in the significant gaps in care and treatment provided by our statutory health service. They do much to promote positive mental health and also play a key role in preventing isolation and addressing social and economic pressures that can lead to anxiety and mental ill-health.

## Attitudes

An anonymised survey of 167 respondents from across West Waterford was conducted as part of the research for this document. Respondents were asked 8 questions and were provided with contact details for a range of mental health supports upon completion of the survey.

- Over three-quarters of respondents report that they have a good or very good general awareness of knowledge relating to mental health.

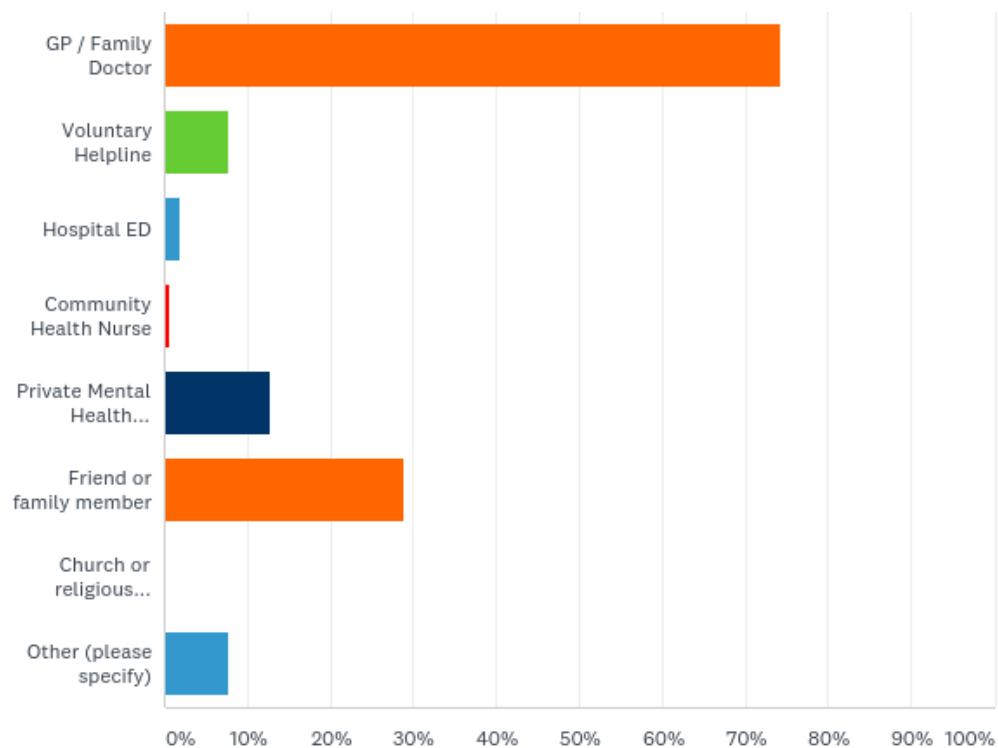
*How would you rate your general awareness or knowledge relating to mental health?*



- 96% of respondents think that mental health is a very important policy issue at local level. This is despite the issue being a major talking point at national level when it comes to policy or public spending, and local authorities, as the primary driver of policy locally, having no official or statutory remit with regards to health or mental health.
- 96.8% of respondents believed that Waterford City and County Council should have a role in promoting positive mental health in the area it covers. Its clear there is an appetite for change in this regard.

- The majority of people would speak with their GP in the first instance if they or someone close to them was experiencing an issue with their mental health. The next largest cohort would speak with a friend or family member in the first instance.

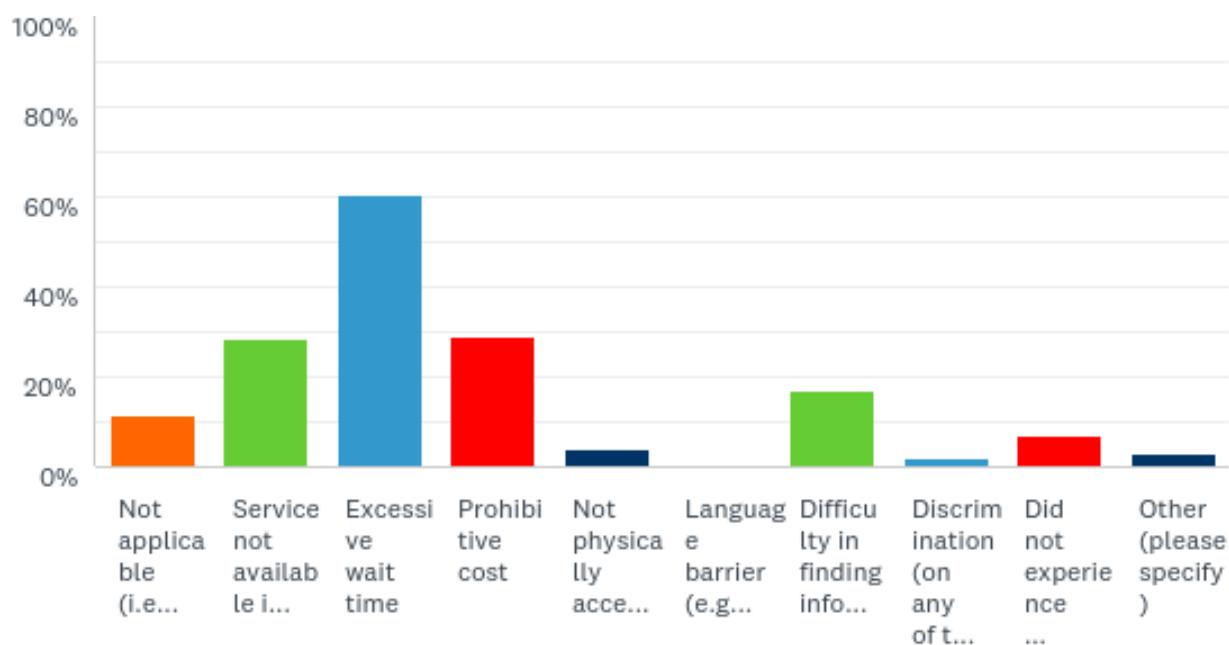
***If you or someone close to you were experiencing an issue with your mental health where would you go first to seek advice, support or treatment?***



- 94% considered that there should be ongoing and age appropriate mental health education and training in both primary and secondary schools, while 5% of respondents felt that such programmes should only be made available in secondary schools.
- 93% of those who responded to the survey consider that there is not an adequate provision of public mental health services in Co. Waterford.
- 60% identified excessive wait time as a barrier to accessing services, while 29% pointed to prohibitive cost as another barrier. A service not being

available in the area was considered a barrier to access by 28.5% of respondents. 16% of respondents identified a difficulty in finding information or making contact as a barrier. Other barriers to access were facilities not being physically accessible (3.9%), discrimination (2%) and language barrier (0.5%).

***Have you or someone you know experienced any of the following barriers in accessing mental health supports or services in Waterford City or County?***



- Respondents were asked how they would rate the level of coordination between agencies or organisations if they or someone close to them have availed of mental health supports or services from more than one agency. Almost 29% of respondents reported a bad level of co-ordination while 32% rated the level of coordination as adequate or good.

## Key Factors

There is a multitude of items and issues that should be considered in any discussion on mental health. It is beyond the scope of this document to deal with these in detail, but it is important to acknowledge the following key factors.

### Youth Mental Health

Adolescence is the peak period of incidence for mental health problems. One in four Irish teenagers have experienced serious personal, emotional, behavioural or mental health problems. Almost one out of every ten teenagers in Ireland has deliberately self-harmed. Mental health issues are the main area of concern for young people in Ireland, and addressing these issues with early and appropriate treatment has a huge positive impact on the lives of young people and their families, and can guard against persistent mental health problems in later life. Child and Adolescent Mental health Services are in chronic disarray across the state. It is widely accepted that this services is at it's most dysfunctional in the South-East. Despite the trojan work several state-wide organisations and networks in the field of youth mental health Waterford does not yet have a permanent youth mental health support space.

### Dual Diagnosis and Addiction

Dual diagnosis is the term used when a person suffers from both a substance abuse problem and another mental health issue such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. In general mental health services and addiction treatments centres have not treated people holistically. In some cases mental health services exclude people with substance abuse problems and vice-versa. There is growing evidence to show that if both the addiction and the underlying psychological problem are treated, the prognosis for recovery is very good. Alcohol abuse remains an issue across Ireland and anecdotal evidence suggests that the use of addictive illegal and prescription drugs is on the increase locally. Mental Health services must recognise the importance of dual diagnosis in treatment and ensuring positive outcomes.

## **Mental Health in Later Life**

Getting older, retiring from work, or seeing children leave home often means a change in lifestyle and can present challenges. One in five older people living in the community, jumping to two in five people living in care homes, experience depression or poor mental health. Managing change, staying active, and maintaining social and community links are important factors. Isolation can lead to depression and loneliness. Financial worries as well as concerns about health or security can lead to stress, anxiety and depression. Our population is ageing and life expectancy is increasing. There is a need for greater attention to the mental health of older people, and this should inform strategy and allocation of resources.

## **Financial Pressure and the Changing Nature of Work**

The nature of work has changed. Permanent jobs are becoming more scarce and job insecurity is a feature of the employment landscape in Ireland. Pay and conditions have not kept up with the rate of economic growth, and many workers are subject to insecure hours in work. For many workers wages have stagnated, while the cost of living increases exponentially. Many families are still dealing with the legacy of the financial crash. Exorbitant car insurance costs are contributing to isolation, especially in rural areas.

## **Mental Health and Disability**

A survey of over 3,000 recipients of a disability allowance suggests that mental health is the issue that affects them most, ahead of mobility or physical issues. Other research shows that a person with an intellectual disability is two to three times more likely to develop a mental health problem than the general population. There are issues around access to services, not just in term of physical access, transport or affordability; but also in terms of attitudes amongst service providers. It is not uncommon for people with disabilities that seek mental health supports to be directed or referred instead to disability services. Ensuring people with disabilities are afforded the same access to appropriate mental health care and supports is vital.

## Traveller Mental Health

Members of the Travelling Community are six times more likely to die by suicide than the general population and the Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care has acknowledged the Travelling Community is experiencing a mental health crisis. Poverty, poor housing and socio-economic factors, as well as prejudice and discrimination are contributing to a situation where addition, self-harm and suicide are becoming increasingly common. The Committee recommendations need to be implemented and resources made available.

## Housing and Homelessness

Ireland is in the grip of a housing and homelessness epidemic. There has been a growth in rough sleeping and street homelessness. Thousands of families are in emergency accommodation across the state and as of January 2019 over 10,000 people are registered homeless in the 26 counties. This is the tip of the iceberg. Many more thousands of families are living in cramped, sub-standard or unsuitable accommodation. Young couples are finding it all but impossible to set up a home and start a family due to an inability to secure a mortgage, the shortage of affordable housing for sale or rent, and a failure by the state to invest in public or cooperative housing.

## Conclusion

It's clear from the research outlined in this document that there are significant gaps in mental health services in West Waterford.

### Key findings

- Statutory mental health services are under-resourced and understaffed in Waterford.
- There is a lack of mental health service provision in West Waterford.
- People in West Waterford have very little confidence in the ability of mental health services to adequately address the needs of the community.
- Of those that had availed of two or more mental health services almost half reported an inadequate level of coordination between services.
- Community and voluntary organisations with a focus on mental health work to fill gaps in service and to address specific needs in the area.
- The community and voluntary sector more broadly has a key preventative and health promotion role to play.
- People in West Waterford consider that they have good general awareness of mental health and most will attend their GP in the first instance if they have a concern about their mental health.
- Excessive wait times, prohibitive cost and lack of information are seen as key barriers to accessing supports and services.
- There is a strong belief in West Waterford that mental health should be an important policy issue at local level and that Waterford City and County Council should have a remit in promoting positive mental health.

## Recommendations

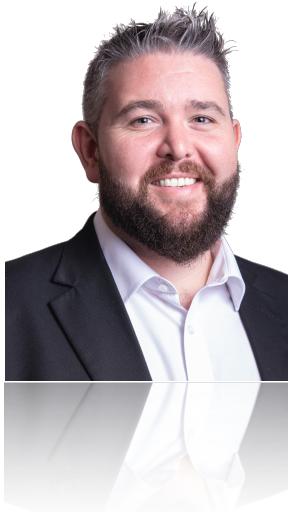
The Government has failed to address the housing crisis; to invest in sustainable job creation; or to tackle a growing problem with drug abuse. Successive governments have neglected our health service and failed to fund or build an adequate, modern mental health service. This inaction and neglect has led us to the current situation.

Notwithstanding the absolute necessity for Government to address the shortcomings in statutory services, there is much that can be done at local level to promote positive mental health, to ameliorate the conditions that lead to anxiety, isolation, stress and mental ill-health, and to support community-based supports for those in crisis or recovery.

These recommendations are offered as a starting point for a much needed discussion on how we in West Waterford can use our resources, infrastructure and influence to affect positive change.

- **Employment of a full-time health and wellbeing officer as part of the Housing, Community and Emergency Services Directorate of Waterford City and County Council.** Details in [Appendix 4](#).
- **Provision to be made in community funding schemes for 1. community-based mental health organisations, and 2. mental health initiatives by community and voluntary organisations with a broader remit i.e. residents associations, development committees, sports clubs etc.**
- **Provision of suicide awareness and prevention training for front line Council employees e.g. those dealing with the public on a regular basis as part of their everyday duties.**

- **Establishment of a Health and Wellbeing Linkage Group as part of the Public Participation Network for Waterford (PPN) to ensure the voice of community organisations are heard on this topic.**
- **Build on the positive work of Waterford Sports Partnership by increasing the emphasis on the positive mental health impacts of participation in sports and physical activity.**
- **Fund and coordinate an ongoing programme of accessible and age appropriate events in our libraries aimed at combatting isolation and promoting positive mental health.**
- **Take a proactive approach in making resources and infrastructure available to community and voluntary organisations, such as Men's and Women's Sheds; GIY groups etc.**
- **Publish an accessible annual directory of services and supports available across Waterford City and County.**



The research in this document is drawn from published sources, from questions submitted to the HSE by David Cullinane TD, and from a survey of over 160 people in West Waterford.

I am grateful for everyone who assisted me in putting together this document. My hope is that it provokes discussion and constructive debate about mental health services and attitudes in West Waterford, and how we, as a community, can work together to promote positive mental health.

*Conor D. McGuinness*

**Sinn Féin Area Representative for the Dungarvan LEA**

[www.conormcguinness.ie](http://www.conormcguinness.ie)

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If anything in this report has affected you, or you feel the need to talk to someone please get in touch with one of the following helplines:

<b>Samaritans</b>	<b>116 123</b>
<b>Pieta House 24/7</b>	<b>1800 247 247</b>
<b>Pieta House South East</b>	<b>051 85 85 10</b>
<b>Childline</b>	<b>1800 66 66 66</b>
<b>Teenline Ireland</b>	<b>1800 83 36 34</b>
<b>Aware</b>	<b>1800 80 48 48</b>

If you or someone you know is at risk of harm or in crisis please dial 999, visit your hospital emergency department, contact your GP, or call the Caredoc out of hours service on 1850 334 999.

# Appendix 1

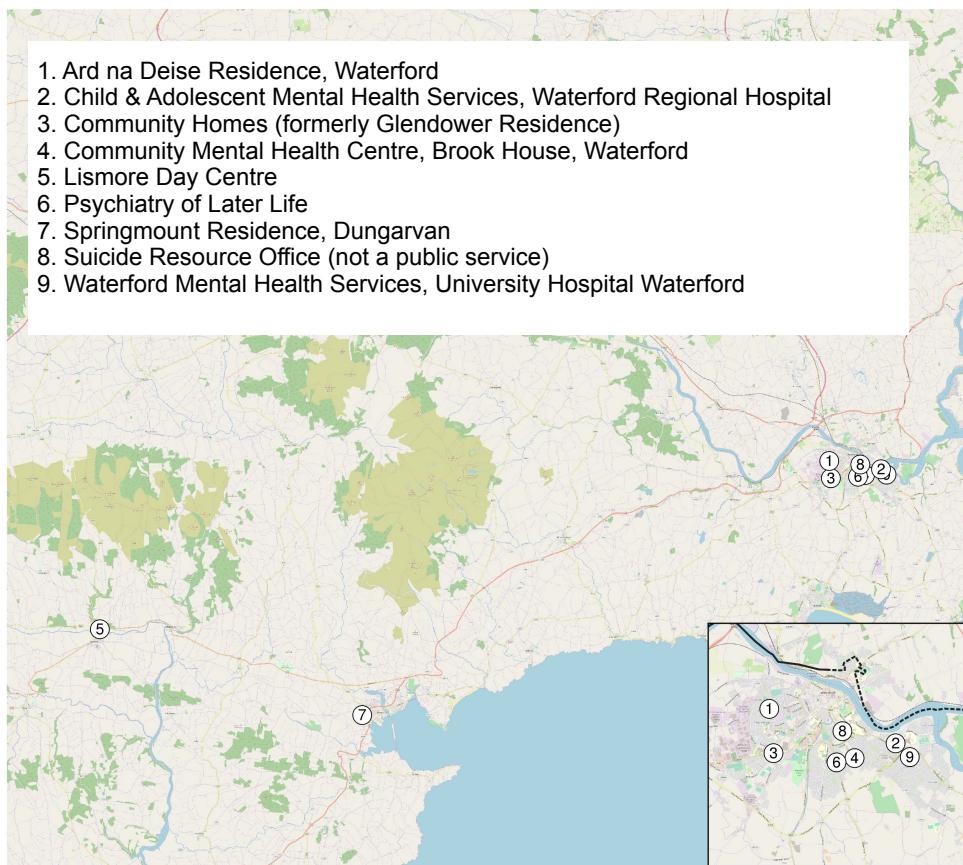
## Staff employed in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team in UHW

Year	Consultant Psychiatrist	Senior Registrar	Clinical Psychologist	S and L Therapist	Dietician	Nurse
2014	1		2	1	0.4	2
2015	1		2	1	0.4	2
2016	1.6	2	2	1	0.4	1.8
2017	1.6	2	2	1	0.4	1.8
2018	1	1	2	1	0.40	1.8

## Appendix 2

### Statutory mental health services in Waterford

	Service	Telephone	Eircode
1	Ard na Deise Residence, Waterford	(051) 848602	X91 C5SK
2	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services, Waterford Regional Hospital	(051) 842146	X91 ER8E
3	Community Homes (formerly Glendower Residence)	(051) 848655	X91 DK31
4	Community Mental Health Centre, Brook House, Waterford	(051) 354804	X91 VW6A
5	Lismore Day Centre	(058) 54716	P51 KX83
6	Psychiatry of Later Life	(051) 842172	X91 DK31
7	Springmount Residence, Dungarvan	(058) 20994	X35 NW53
8	Suicide Resource Office (not a public service)	(051) 874013	X91 KX25
9	Waterford Mental Health Services, University Hospital Waterford	(051) 848000	X91 ER8E



## Appendix 3

### Community and Voluntary Mental Health Services in Waterford

	Name	Purpose/objective	Website	Eircore
1	Aware, Waterford Support Group	Depression & bipolar disorder support & self care groups are based in Waterford	<a href="https://www.aware.ie/support/support-groups/waterford/">https://www.aware.ie/support/support-groups/waterford/</a>	X91 EK68
2	Barnardos	(1) Family Support Project – Dungarvan  (2) Barnardos Regional Office - South East  (3) Barnardos Centre - Waterford	<a href="http://www.barnardos.ie">www.barnardos.ie</a>	(1) X91 Y44A  (2) X35 DE98  (3) X91 KPW9
3	Bodywhys	Bodywhys is the national voluntary organisation supporting people affected by eating disorders.	<a href="http://www.bodywhys.ie">www.bodywhys.ie</a>	Various locations
4	Family Resource Centre	Women's Development Group; Parents Plus Parenting Programme; Parent & Toddler Group; Family Support (One to One) Advice and Information on Family Related Issues; Part-time Low Cost Counselling Service; Employment Supports	<a href="http://www.familyresource.ie/details.php?ID=85">http://www.familyresource.ie/details.php?ID=85</a>	X91 C7WT
-	GROW	Community based mutual support group for people affected by mental health problems	<a href="http://www.grow.ie">www.grow.ie</a>	Dungarvan
5	Focus Ireland - Waterford	Focus Ireland works with people who are homeless or are at risk of losing their homes across Ireland	<a href="http://www.focusireland.ie">www.focusireland.ie</a>	X91 DNY0
6	Laochas – the 'Warrior Soul Project'	A newly formed non-profit will be working with young people in Waterford to try fill the gap in mental health services locally.	Facebook Page @LaochasTheWarriorSoulProject	NA
7	Pieta House – South East	Providing a specialised treatment programme for people who have suicidal ideation or who participate in self harming behaviours.	<a href="http://www.pieta.ie">www.pieta.ie</a>	X91 RC53

8	Samaritans Waterford and the South-East	To work for the assistance of persons who are suicidal, despairing or in distress.	<a href="https://www.samaritans.org/branches/samaritans-waterford-and-south-east">https://www.samaritans.org/branches/samaritans-waterford-and-south-east</a>	X91 C868
9	Shine – South East Area	Empower people with mental ill health and their families through support, information and education while also advocating for social change.	<a href="http://www.shine.ie">www.shine.ie</a>	X91 RC53
10	The Shona Project	Promotion of positive mental attitude, create awareness and understanding of issues faced by young girls and actively support and empower young girls.	<a href="http://www.shona.ie">www.shona.ie</a>	X91 WA4V
11	Waterford Mental Health association company	To promote the general welfare and the medical, social and industrial rehabilitation, training and resettlement of persons suffering from mental illness and/or physiological or emotional disturbances or any description	<a href="http://www.waterfordmentalhealthassociation.com/">http://www.waterfordmentalhealthassociation.com/</a>	X91 DK31



## Appendix 4

### Health and Wellbeing Officer Proposal

#### Context

- The mission of Waterford City and County Council is 'to make Waterford the best possible place for all its people' and the Community and Sport Department aims to 'help communities become vibrant and safe with an excellent quality of life and a sustainable, healthier future'.
- The 2015-2020 Economic and Community Development Plan for Waterford seeks to 'improve dialogue', and 'facilitate stronger and more resilient communities'.
- It identifies Waterford City and County Council as the lead body in advancing the goal of a 'stronger, safer and healthier Waterford' and it sets 'stronger connections between people and services' and 'stronger participation of all Waterford communities' as objectives.
- As of April 2016 the Council has 850 staff.

#### Proposal

That Waterford City and County Council would create a full-time, resourced, management position of Health and Wellbeing Officer within its Community and Sport Department, on a similar basis to the Heritage Officer, Arts Officer and Oifigeach Gaeilge positions.

#### Role

The Health and Wellbeing Officer would:

- Lead Council initiatives on issues relating to health and wellbeing, including mental health, eg. training, publicity campaigns, publications etc.

- Engage with statutory providers, health promotion professionals, community and voluntary bodies and Council management on issues relating to health and well-being.
- Facilitate ongoing engagement between Council HR and trade union representatives on mental health matters.
- Contribute to the formulation of strategic plans, and liaise with relevant stakeholders eg. LCDC, PPN, Comhairle na nÓg, WWETB, Waterford Childcare Committee, Waterford Sports Partnership, South East Regional Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce, Waterford/Wexford Community Services etc.
- Support the work of Healthy Waterford and expand the project to include the whole City and County as part of the Government of Ireland and World Health Organisation networks.
- Liaise with community and voluntary mental health organisations to identify funding opportunities relevant to their work.
- Coordinate the availability and provision of Council infrastructure for health and wellbeing initiatives and community organisations such as Mens Sheds, Women's Sheds etc.

## Notes

