Teachers' Union of Ireland

Response to invitation by the Department of Education (DoE) regarding the consultation process of five government departments on the strategic framework for lifelong guidance.

(February 2023)

Introduction

The TUI would like to thank the DoE for the opportunity to make this submission.

The TUI represents teachers, lecturers and staff (21,000+) in Education and Training Boards (ETBs), voluntary secondary schools, Community and Comprehensive (C&C) schools, Youthreach, institutes of technology and technological universities and those working in out of school services.

Background

Ireland has an internationally acknowledged, high-performing education system and a respected teaching profession (Teaching Council, 2010; OECD, 2013; DES, 2018a; OECD, 2015a; NAPD, 2016; Comhairle na nOg, 2017; Growing Up in Ireland, 2017; IPSOS MRBI Trust in the Professions Survey, 2017; Boyle, 2017; Boyle, 2019; Scanlon & McKenna, 2018; EU Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018; Kantar Millward Brown, 2018; EU Commission, 2018; EU Commission, 2019a; EU Commission, 2019b; Social Progress Initiative, 2018; United Nations Development Programme, 2018, Irish Survey of Student Engagement, 2018; HEA, 2019; Coolahan, 2017; Eivers, 2019; CSO, 2019a; McKeown et al., 2019; CSO, 2020b; OECD, 2020a; Eurofound, 2020; McNamara et al., 2020; Clerkin and Perkins, 2020; Clark & Kavanagh, 2021; OECD, 2021a; CSO, 2021; EU Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021; Indecon, 2020; Purdy et al., 2021; CSO, 2022a; DE, 2021b; Smyth et al., 2022; Gabriel et al., 2022; Clark et al., 2022;

Delaney et al., 2022).

That is despite Ireland spending relatively little on education (OECD, 2015b; SJI, 2018, NERI, 2018, OECD, 2019a; UNDP, 2019; OECD, 2021a; Kovacic et al., 2021; CSO, 2022a; Clark et al., 2022) and experiencing historic underinvestment (DES, 2018b). The CSO (2022a) has stated that real expenditure per student in post-primary fell 5.8% between 2008 and 2018, and real expenditure per student in higher education fell 35%. Ireland also has the 8th largest class sizes in upper secondary in all of the EU/EFTA and EU candidate countries. In higher education, Ireland has extraordinarily large class sizes by international comparison i.e 23:1 compared to 15:1 (OECD, 2021a). Despite this, citizen satisfaction with the education system in Ireland is the highest of any of 22 European countries studied by Boyle (2018) whilst parent satisfaction with the Irish education system was the second highest out of fifty-six countries in Clerkin et al. (2020). Boyle (2021) found a high level of citizenship satisfaction with the education system in Ireland as well as Ireland being fourth in Europe in its ability to meet the needs of a competitive economy and also a greater ability by students in Ireland than the European average to deal with unusual situations and to overcome difficulties. Boyle et al. (2022) made broadly similar findings.

It is also worthwhile noting that 2019 data (OECD, 2019b) shows that both citizen satisfaction with the education system, and the economic return to the taxpayer of investment in education, are both extraordinarily high in Ireland compared to international norms (see also Smyth et al., 2022). An Ipsos MRBI survey in 2019 found extraordinarily high levels of public trust in teachers, much higher than for journalists, Gardai, civil servants, politicians, business leaders, social media influencers, bankers or even the "ordinary person in the street" (Irish Times January 31st, 2019). ESRI (2020) found very high levels of trust of young people in the Irish education system.

Ireland has a very young population (Eurostat, 2015; Government of Ireland, 2019; DCYA, 2020). In 2008, we had the second highest proportion of 10–14-year-olds in the European Union (CSO, 2009). The high birth rate in Ireland (CSO, 2017; Eurostat, 2017; Government of Ireland, 2019) and rate of natural increase (CSO, 2022c; CSO, 2022d) indicates that the

population of young people is likely to remain high for the foreseeable future. The DE (2021a) has estimated that the student population in post- primary will rise by approximately seven thousand students per year until reaching a peak enrolment of c.408k in 2024/25. Student numbers in higher education are also projected to rise substantially (DES, 2018d). In this context, it is not sufficient to suggest that a world- class child-centred society can be achieved with inadequate resources of time or personnel. In terms of overall expenditure on education, Ireland and Greece were the only EU member states in 2015 to spend significantly less than the UN SDG 4 minimum of 4% of GDP on education (UNESCO, 2022). The DES (2018b) has itself acknowledged "historic underinvestment".

The growing economy (ESRI, 2021; EU Commission, 2021; OECD, 2021b; IBEC, 2021; Central Bank, 2022; IMF, 2021; CSO, 2022b; ESRI, 2022a; ESRI, 2022b; CSO, 2023) means that Government is in a good position to make a meaningful contribution to continue supporting students with additional needs or from under-represented target groups and/or migrant and refugee communities.

Close examination of all relevant data indicates that schools in the ETB and C&C sectors enrol, by far, the largest proportion of students with special needs and coming from areas of educational and economic disadvantage. ETB schools are two to four times more likely to be designated DEIS as other school types (DES statistics, 2018). As cited in Fischer (2016: 167) *"community schools and vocational or technical schools under VEC (and now ETB) management cater for a much more diverse school population and for a disproportionate number of immigrants or children of immigrants, as the results of the 2008 Department survey clearly showed."*

In the case of third level, there is also evidence of a class divide. For example, almost a quarter of students in UCD and Trinity College attended fee-paying schools, compared to less than one percent in some IoTs (Irish Times, May 18th 2018).

Lifelong Guidance

The TUI acknowledges that there has been some increase in guidance support, especially in post-primary schools, in recent years. However, special schools are still without meaningful

guidance support and any restoration in mainstream schools settings is coming off a low base. For example, DPER (2018) showed that there were only five hundred guidance teacher posts in Irish post-primary schools in 2017. It must also be remembered that students numbers have increased significantly since then (DE, 2021a; DES 2017b).

It should be borne in mind that that the population of Irish schools is currently undergoing a significant change in its composition as well as its size with new students entering from the system from conflict zones for example. OECD (2018d: 270) has made clear that

"Education and career guidance is particularly important for students with an immigrant background, given the limited knowledge students and their parents might have about career opportunities, and how best to prepare for them."

OECD (2018e) makes clear that transitions are a very difficult time especially for students coming from disadvantaged communities. The report makes clear that availability of guidance staff is very important in this context. As stated by the OECD (2018e: 227)

"Ineffective transitions can also stem from an increasingly well-documented phenomenon of "summer melt", in which students indicate their intent to enrol in post-secondary institutions in the spring of their last year of secondary school, followed by a failure to ever enrol. Behavioural research in the context of the United States has shown that this is especially prevalent among students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. In some analyses, 4 in every 10 students from low-income families who have reported a desire to enrol in tertiary education, fail to do so during the summer (Castleman and Page, 2014). Financial barriers for enrolment are an obvious constraint, but policymakers must also be conscious of other constraints. In particular, the way in which the information for enrolment in higher levels of education is conveyed may contribute to persistent inequality of access. Students may suffer from inadequate counselling and insufficient incentives to access formal support even when it is available. Effective career advice helps students to understand their potential, to update their initial expectations and to better situate all their post-secondary options.

Effective transitions to post-secondary education and the labour market depend on intensive, individualised coaching and guidance. Guidance counselling is a key tool to help students self-identify their aspirations and abilities. It includes both general career and post-secondary

counselling, where students learn about the work environment and post-secondary options, as well as individual advice, where students reflect on their potential choices."

The OECD goes on to give an indication of the level of guidance provision that should be available in schools, for example:

"the maximal recommended number of students per guidance counsellor is 250 and the rate should be lower for guidance counsellors serving large numbers of students with social and educational disadvantages (American School Counsellor Association, 2015)."

(OECD, 2018e: 229)

This is a rate of provision that Irish schools can only dream of.

It is vitally important that guidance staff in all sectors have the time to spend with students/learners on a one-to-one basis. Indecon (2019) made clear that there is a distinct role provided by guidance counsellors and that 21% of students only started thinking about careers when they were already in college.

IGC (2019: 4) stated that

"a majority of guidance counsellors (83.2%) have insufficient time to respond to students' needs in a timely manner (IGC 2019). Currently, 94.1% of IGC members in second level schools report they are delivering some hours of guidance counselling to their students in their spare time, i.e. outside of their allocations. Nearly a third (30.4%) report that they work more than 7 hours outside of their allocations on a weekly basis - the equivalent of a 6th day of work weekly. This is not sustainable long term given the demanding nature of the work of guidance counsellors."

The time pressures on guidance staff are having an impact on availability of personnel. For example, the IGC (2022: 5) has stated that

"In the 2017/18 academic year, Guidance Counselling was the 6th most challenging post to fill in second level schools according to a study by JMB. The previous year it was the 9th most challenging, and the year before the 10th. In other words, the shortage of guidance counsellors is increasing and may continue to do so unless addressed. IGC research (2018;

2019; 20) also show that in some schools (in 2020 22.4%), some aspects of guidance counselling are delivered by non-qualified personnel. This could have serious consequences and put personnel, school management and students at risk as guidance counselling requires specific competencies, skills and knowledge of confidentiality/ethical issues (IGC 2017)."

In relation to time pressures, the IGC (2022: 4) also found that
"when combined with classroom teaching of guidance counselling which equates to 5.1 hours, guidance counsellors were spending 10.6 hours weekly in the classroom (IGC, 2020). At the same time, the survey found that 10.6% of full-time qualified guidance counsellors in second level schools are not practising at all, while at the same time 22.4% of schools report using unqualified internal staff to deliver guidance counselling, equating to 6.4 hours per week; and 26.4% of schools report using external providers for counselling, equating to 7.40 hours weekly."

The cuts to guidance services in schools, colleges of further education and in the adult education sector which occurred over the last decade have had a tremendously detrimental effect on the support which can be given to students, especially those at risk of educational disadvantage such as early school leaving and additional needs. As stated by the IGC (2016a: 1),
"Since September 2012, guidance counselling provision has experienced an overall cut to service provision of the order of 27.6%, 30% in DEIS schools, and a catastrophic 53.5% reduction in one-to-one counselling. The service has been decimated."

Guidance counsellors help to prevent early school leaving so it is important to note that
"the latest available EU figures showed that in 2016 11% of all 18 to 24-year olds in the EU28 member states were classified as early school leavers. The Irish equivalent rate was 6% in the same period. This ranked the country seventh lowest among EU member states" (CSO, 2018a: 5).

The Department of Education also calculates the early school leaver rate in Ireland as being significantly lower than peer countries (DES, 2017a). In fact, in 2015, people in Ireland aged 15-64 were 1.48 times more likely to have a degree than to be educated only to lower

secondary level or below (CSO, 2018b). Early school leavers are three to four times more likely to be unemployed than those who complete upper secondary school (Irish Times May 13th, 2009). This has implications for private and national income. SJI (2018: 4) has reported that "those whose education ceased at lower secondary or less carry a one in four chance of being poor; the risk is less than half this for those with a third level qualification". Sahlberg (2015: 35) states clearly that

"It is estimated that each young person who doesn't complete upper secondary school will, on average, cost 1.4 million US dollars to the society in lost tax revenues, increased health and social costs, and often chronic unemployment."

Healy et al. (2018:176) found that

"Ireland ranked second in EU28 for the percentage of people aged 20-24 with at least upper-second level education at 91.2 per cent. However, while the gap between retention rates in DEIS and non-DEIS schools has halved since 2001, it still stands at 8.5 per cent. This means that the rate of early school leaving in DEIS schools stands at 15.6 per cent. Ireland's early school leaving rate must also be viewed in light of a very high NEET rate. In 2016, Ireland's NEET rate among 20-34 year olds was 18.5 per cent, slightly higher than the EU28 average of 18.3 per cent. Young people aged 25-29 were the worst affected, with 19.4 per cent NEET."

OECD (2018b) found that

- 8% of 15-24 year olds in Ireland are participating in technical and vocational programmes compared to an OECD average of 18% and an EU22 average of 19%.
- 85% of 15 year olds in Ireland are achieving at least proficiency level 2 in maths compared to an OECD average of 77% and an EU22 average of 79%.
- The percentage of younger adults with below upper secondary education has fallen between 2007 and 2017. Across OECD countries, the share decreased from 20% in 2007 to 15% in 2017.
- 50% of 18-24 year olds in Ireland are not in education compared to an OECD average of 47% and an EU22 average of 44%.

- 13% of 15-29 year olds in Ireland are NEET – the exact same as the OECD and EU22 averages. The equivalent figures for foreign-born 15-29 years olds is 15% in Ireland, 18% in the OECD and 20% in the EU22.
- On average across OECD countries, the unemployment rate is almost twice as high for those who have not completed upper secondary education as for those with higher qualifications: 15% of younger adults (age 25-34) without upper secondary education are unemployed, compared to around 7% for those with a higher level of education (i.e. upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary education or tertiary education).
- A worker in Ireland with a tertiary education earns on average 168% of the salary of a worker with upper secondary education. The equivalent figure for the OECD is 154% and in the EU22 151%.
- The private Internal Rate of Return (IRR) for a man attaining tertiary education is 22% in Ireland, 14% in the OECD and 12% in the EU22. The private IRR for a woman is 29% in Ireland, 16% in the OECD and 13% in the EU22. The public IRR for a man in Ireland is 21% compared to 10% in both the OECD and the EU22. The public IRR for a woman is 14% in Ireland, 8% in the OECD and 9% in the EU22.

Full restoration of the six hundred posts in ex-quota guidance removed in 2012 has still not happened, especially when rising student numbers are factored in. A further one hundred and fifty posts were also lost from the guidance enhancement initiative. One of the three principles of the guidance enhancement initiative was to prevent early school leaving.

As cited by AEGAI (2018: 1)

"as stated by the Solas FET strategy "the Adult Guidance Service enables individuals and (therefore) communities to achieve their developmental, personal, social, career and employment aspirations. Guidance facilitates the acquisition of Career Management Skills and benefits employees throughout their working life.""

AEGAI (2018) states that Adult Guidance Service met 52,000 beneficiaries annually with a cost to the State of just €125 per beneficiary. Furthermore, the 2012 operational guidelines meant that "some changes were introduced, which include AEGI staff working with 16-18-year old's as a new target group" (AEGAI, 2018: 3).

As well as providing career guidance, guidance counsellors in school and adult settings also often find themselves providing emotional support to students. Ryan (1993) found that many counsellors provide advice to students on a wide range of problems relating to family, sex, social and emotional development, bullying, unreasonable academic expectations, and alcohol and drug abuse. Guidance counsellors in schools are also responsible for subject teaching. Furthermore, guidance counsellors spend significant amounts of time involved in critical incident teams, liasing with outside agencies and keeping up to date with new developments in further and higher education.

The resilience of Irish students is significantly above the OECD average (OECD, 2018c) largely due to the work of guidance counsellors.

In relation specifically to guidance services in third level, Brown (2016: 4) states that

"University counselling services must be properly funded and signposted, with staff trained to spot the signs of mental health problems and direct students to the most appropriate support."

Brown (2016: 7) makes clear that "on average, students are less happy and more anxious than non-students, including other young people". Brown (2016: 16) cites studies on the mental health of third level students such as

"The NUS survey from May 2013 of approximately 1,200 university students found that:

- *80 per cent reported stress;*
- *70 per cent reported a lack of energy or motivation;*
- *66 per cent reported feeling unhappy;*
- *55 per cent reported anxiety;*
- *50 per cent reported having trouble sleeping; and*
- *49 per cent reported a depressed feeling.*

The 2016 Unite survey found that, among students who had strongly considered dropping out of higher education:

- *76 per cent reported feeling stressed or worried;*
- *46 per cent reported feeling down or depressed; and*
- *43 per cent reported feeling isolated or lonely."*

As stated above, guidance counsellors often spend considerable amounts of time liasing with outside agencies to ensure that students who are encountering difficulties can access support from relevant agencies. Many of these support services are vital if a student who is experiencing difficulties is to be adequately supported.

The crisis in provision of support to students with mental health needs were starkly illustrated in the 2017 Seanad Public Consultation Committee Report on Children's Mental Health services. Some of the key points outlined in that report were:

- Ireland has the fourth highest teenage suicide rate in the developed world. The report further highlighted that Irish children aged between 11 and 15 are the second highest in Europe presenting with emotional issues on a weekly basis.
- At the time of writing this Report, there are 2,818 children waiting clinical assessment by a consultant child psychiatrist in Ireland. Some 218 of those children have been on that waiting list for over a year. This is largely due to the fact that there are insufficient numbers of child psychiatrists.
- Of the recommended 127 specialist CAMHS teams, only are 67 teams in operation and even then not all are operating to full capacity.
- Funding for mental health services made up just 6.1% of the HSE's total operational budget. This is significantly less than the recommended 8.24%.
- At the end of 2016, 1,500 vacant posts exist in the HSE's mental health division operational plan.
- Only 8 out of 17 weekend mental health services are in operation around the country.

The TUI warmly welcomes the recommendations of the recent Oireachtas Committee report on mental health supports in schools and tertiary education (Oireachtas, 2023). Amongst the key recommendations are:

- Additional middle management posts with time allocation.
- Additional external supports such as OT/SLT/psychological etc.
- Multi-annual core funding for student counselling in FE and HE.

Regulation

Guidance counsellors in recognised post-primary schools must hold dual professional qualifications: that of post-primary teacher and that of post-primary guidance counsellor. The TUI believes that it is vital that this continues and that the regulator continues to be the Teaching Council. Students need to know that their guidance counsellor has the skills of both role. The TUI agrees with the DoE (2022c: 3) when the DoE states that "there are sound educational and pedagogical reasons for the requirement to hold both as this is a complex role which involves, both teaching, curriculum design, and guidance counselling and therefore requires a comprehensive understanding of the post-primary role." It would be utterly counter-productive for guidance counsellors to be regulated by two separate bodies. In fact it could lead to chaos and atrophy if the two regulators had different, and possibly even contradictory, regulatory requirements and processes.

Purpose of Lifelong Guidance

Lifelong guidance plays many key roles in supporting students in post-primary, FET and HE. There's an educational and pedagogical aspect, a career planning and information aspect, a mental health role and a parental support aspect. It is important that all of these aspects are respected and that the role is not reduced just to a labour market initiative. Depending on the sector involved, it is important that students be able to see education as being a lifelong aim and that students be aware of the benefits of education as a end in itself. Progression through the National Framework of Qualifications is important but the social and community aspects of students participating in Level 1-4 programmes in their local community is also

important. A parent who is supported to participate in basic literacy and numeracy programmes, and even extra-mural courses, is demonstrating tot heir children that education is enjoyable and important. It's not just about whether the student 'progressed' into employment.

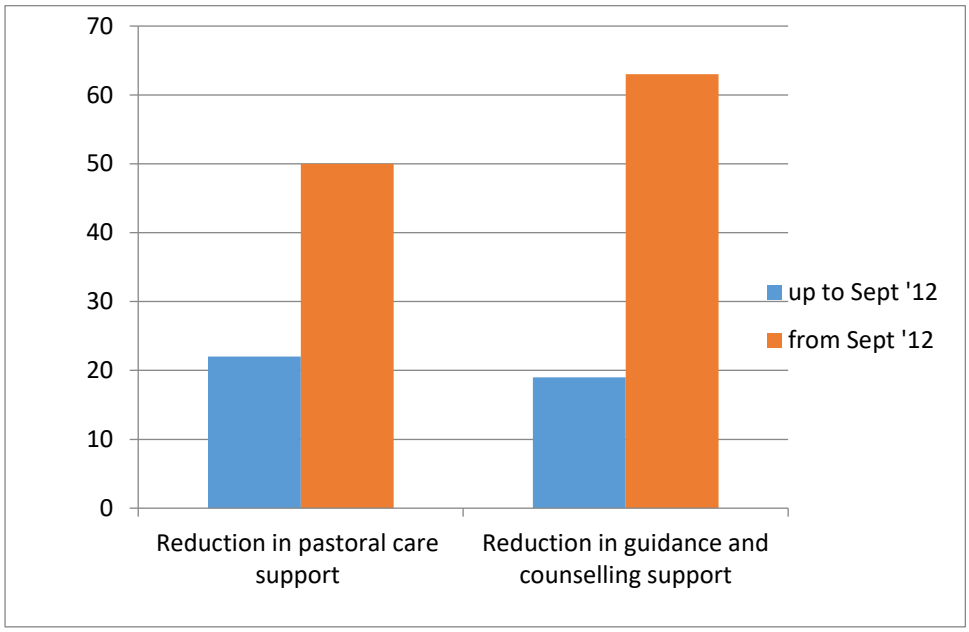
Accessibility

Guidance support needs to be available to students in all areas of the education system. Staff need to have time available to be able to meet students as needs and queries arise. The Covid pandemic, and the rise in numbers of international protection refugees recently, clearly indicate that the needs of different cohorts of learners can be very different. Inclusion, equity and sustainability must be built into the level of resources provided by the taxpayer. It is important that sufficient resources be available that students can access guidance support in decisions relating to, for example, subject choice from as soon as they enter the port-primary system. Smyth (2023) has shown how important school staff are to students making career choices but also points out that students in fee-charging schools are much more likely to have a one-to-one session with a school guidance counsellor.

Cuts to Guidance Supports

A TUI study (2012), conducted by Behaviour and Attitudes gathered extensive data on the impact of the budget cuts on schools and students. In a sample of 88 schools close to a quarter (22%) reported that the level of pastoral care had been reduced by September 2012 and 19% reported reductions in guidance provision. Following the decision to withdraw provision for ex-quota posts many more schools reported expected reductions in these critical areas from September 2012 - 63% reported an expected reduction in guidance provision and 50% reported an expected reduction in pastoral care services. Later detail provided by schools confirmed that this drastic reduction in these essential services has become a reality. The allocation of a year head (from the reduced pool of senior posts) to each year group, seen by many as the key to strong pastoral care systems, is now a luxury in most schools. 70% of all

respondents in the study (283) ranked the resulting negative impact on support and welfare services to students as high but management felt they had little choice.

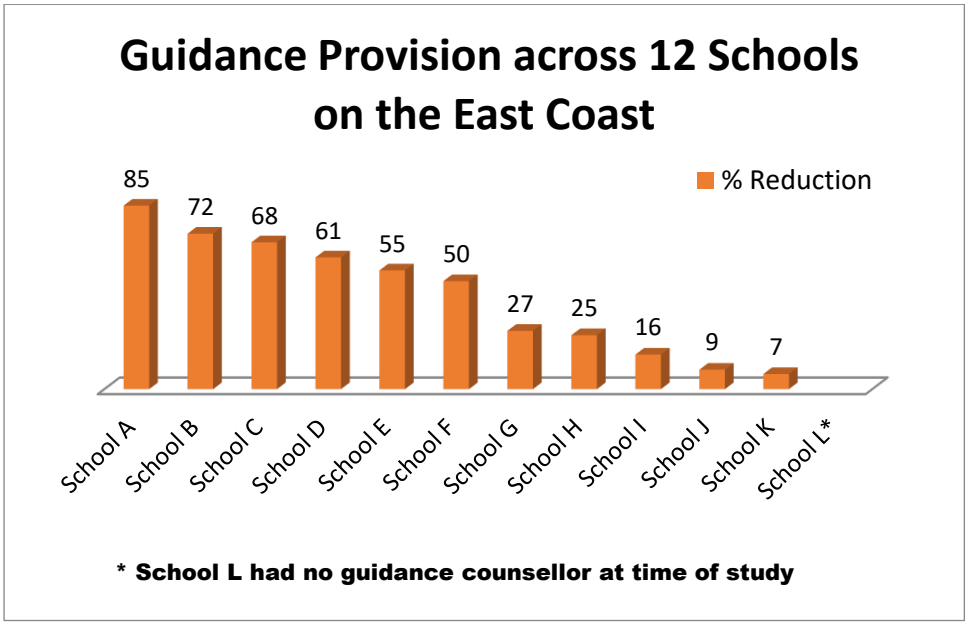


Percentage schools reporting a reduction in pastoral care and guidance and counselling support (Source: Internal TUI Study, 2012)

A smaller, localised study across 12 schools on the east coast paints the reality that arises from the removal of ex-quota provision for guidance. By September 2013 half of the schools involved had reduced discrete provision for guidance and counselling by over 50% and one third had reduced it by over 60% (the highest reduction was 85%). Just one quarter of the schools surveyed had retained discrete provision for guidance at over 80% of the original allocation. At the time of the study one school indicated it no longer had a guidance counsellor. Feedback also flagged that some guidance provision was now general in nature and delivered by non-specialist teachers or guest speakers.

Additional data and commentary from personnel in these schools showed that within the discrete time allocated to guidance work, many guidance counsellors are now expected to concentrate on delivering guidance to whole class groups. These trends have also been identified by a recent independent national study (LifeCare Psychological Services) in 240

second level schools which found that the amount of time guidance counsellors are spending on timetabled class room activity has increased by 19.8% which can include curriculum guidance, subject teaching, SPHE and other activities.



Both studies emphasised the provision for one-to-one support sessions as the biggest casualty of the removal of ex-quota guidance posts. The LifeCare Psychological Services study found a 51.4% reduction in the time available for one-to-one student counselling with guidance counsellors struggling to fit this in around timetabled and other commitments. The highly specialised expertise of the guidance counsellor and the 'necessary confidential space' are, therefore, no longer readily available to students who need individualised, high support to deal with personal issues and/or career advice. Individual sessions are by necessity restricted, often reserved for the extreme case that presents after a student has already endured significant personal distress or trauma. Notably, some guidance counsellors are not facilitated in attending their personal supervision sessions; an essential to ensure best practice. In addition, the guidance counsellor can no longer assign time to core planning or co-ordination activities that support other staff with less specialist expertise in working with students.

A 2013/14 study by TUI found that

- 42% of surveyed schools/centres experienced an increase in student numbers but a decrease in guidance provision.

  The modal reduction was 41-50%.
- 94% of guidance counsellors were facilitated to attend supervision.
- 93% of guidance counsellors were sometimes or always facilitated to attend appropriate CPD
- In 30% of cases, non-guidance staff were carrying out guidance and counselling work. In three fifths of those cases, external personnel were involved. In two fifths of cases, other staff members were assigned to guidance and counselling work.
- In 86% of surveyed schools/centres, the number of guidance classes were increased, but in 93% of schools individual/group sessions were reduced. 91% of guidance counsellors spent less time than previously talking to stakeholders about subject choice, and 100% spent less time talking about programme choice.
- In response to a question about the capacity of qualified guidance counsellors to respond to situations:

  37% were "not at all satisfied" with their ability to respond to the immediate needs of individual students,

  25% were "not at all satisfied" with their ability to respond to crisis situations,

  29% were "not at all satisfied" with their ability to support general pastoral case activity.
- 39 schools/centres (sample size 124) had no displacement of guidance by curricular subjects.

  5 of those schools/centres under 250 students i.e. 13% but the overall sample had 7% small schools so larger schools/centres being hit disproportionately.
- Only 3 of the 124 schools/centres had at least 11 hours per week of guidance and counselling provision provided by a qualified guidance counsellor.
- 14 schools/centres spent more than 11 hours per week (over and above allocated hours) to the delivery of the guidance service.
- 34 schools/centres in 2013/2014, and 30 in 2012/2013, had allocated non-guidance personnel to address shortfalls in guidance and counselling work. In 5 schools/centres, these extra personnel had to provide 11 or more hours to fill the

gap. In one case of a school of over 750 students, it was 35 hours. In 5 schools it wasn't possible to quantify as arrangements were ad hoc, informal, not timetabled and sometimes voluntary.

IGC (2016b: 4, 5) states that

"there has been a reduction of 53.5% in time for one to one counselling. It also highlights an overall reduction in the service of 27.6%, with significant variations among school types (IGC, 2016). When looked at in terms of the overall loss between 2011/12 and 2015/16, one-to-one student work has dropped from 12.0 hours to 5.59 hours per week, which represents a catastrophic decrease in service of 53.5 per cent. Overall, only 85.9% of employed qualified guidance counsellors are practicing while, at the same time, sixty-three schools reported using 106 unqualified persons to deliver guidance on a weekly basis; and another 6.1% of schools used external providers for guidance and 28.2% of schools use external providers for one-to-one counselling. Seventeen diverse groups/organisations are used by 40.8% of schools, with no overarching quality and/or evaluation system in place to monitor this situation."

Research conducted by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE, 2013) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills, found a similar guidance service reduction of 26% was found, resulting in the NCGE recommending to the DES that "the ex-quota allocation for guidance in schools should be restored as a priority".

Harkin (2015) found that the removal of ex-quota impacted negatively on care in second level schools, but that experience differed by school type. Fee-paying schools were able to access additional sources of finance and funding; that parent power had an impact on decision-making around Guidance services; and that both the school management and parents regarded Guidance, particularly career guidance, as important.

In the context of access to third level and retention in third level, the then Chief Executive Officer of the HEA stated that "we also need to ensure that there is adequate guidance and information at second level" (Irish Independent May 18th 2018). As cited in IGC (2016a):

"Previous Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI) research found that young people attending disadvantaged schools are significantly less likely to go on to higher education than those attending middle-class or socially mixed schools (McCoy et al., 2014; DES, 2013). In more middle-class schools, the focus is not on whether to go on to higher education but on which college and which course (Smyth and Banks, 2012; McCoy et al., 2010); while in contrast, students in disadvantaged schools, lack the 'insider' knowledge through the family networks available to their middle-class peers and are more reliant on formal school-based guidance.

This finding is supported by the 4th Audit (IGC 2016b) which found practice hours for fee-paying schools increased by 1.9% from 2011/12 to 2015/16, while schools in the FES decreased by 26.7%, and in DEIS schools, by 30%. DEIS schools had previously been in receipt of additional guidance resources through the Guidance Enhancement Initiative; and the ESRI had highlighted that its abolition was likely to lead to even greater difficulties in combining the educational guidance and personal counselling elements of the guidance counsellor role in the context of reduced resources (Smyth et al., 2015)."

In relation to access to further and higher education, the TUI would like to draw your attention to the submission which the TUI made to HEA in 2021. It can be accessed at TUI submission to HEA on Higher Education Access - May 2021 (1).docx (live.com). The TUI would also like to darw your attention to our submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Education regarding a higher education funding which can be accessed at TUI submission to Oireachtas Committee Regarding HE Funding - Feb 2022 (2).pdf. Furthermore you may wish to look at our submission on a unified tertiary education system and on Senior Cycle which can, respectively, be found at TUI submission to DFHERIS re Unified Tertiary System Policy Platform_Final July 27th (1).pdf and https://www.tui.ie/_fileupload/Leaving%20Certificate%20Reform%20Submission%20to%20Joint%20Committee%20on%20Education,%20Further%20and%20Higher%20Education,%20Research,%20Innovation%20&%20Science%202021.pdf.

A survey carried out by the ASTI in 2013 found that

"as a result of the abolition of ex-quota guidance counselling provision in schools in September 2012, 78% of schools have made changes to their guidance counselling services. Of particular concern to the ASTI is that 7 in 10 schools have reduced the provision of one-to-one guidance counselling for students"; and that "almost 60% of Principals stated that the moratorium on posts of responsibility (in-school middle management posts) has had a high adverse impact on the wellbeing of students".

Guidance teams need to have time to meet and discuss plans as well as existing difficult personal cases. Furthermore, the often sensitive nature of counselling means that guidance counsellors need time to debrief e.g. as currently pertains on Tuesday afternoons.

CPD

Keeping abreast of current, up to date sources of career information can be a challenge, and particularly difficult in Ireland, where one has to access different sources such as Career Portal; university/IOT/TU websites; Smart Futures; An Bord Altranais; Gradireland.com etc. The UK has some really useful career resources, such as the National Career Service. There is broad agreement that the effective use of online career information resources such as Career Portal, Qualifax and the CAO website require a high level of support from guidance professionals. This appears to be the case at second level and further education as well as in the adult guidance service. Such support includes group/class instruction in navigating and interpreting the information as well as one to one guidance and support in the use of online resources and working through the jargon.

Other quality sources of information include guest speakers coming to schools and colleges; local employers; employment agencies; supported employment organisations and

recruitment services. Events such as career fairs can be very effective, particularly when guidance professionals in the schools and colleges liaise with employers and support services in their planning and delivery. Psychometric instruments, such as Career Decisions and Career Directions can be useful particularly in FE and Adult Guidance. Ability testing can also be useful with these groups in terms of giving individuals the confidence in their literacy and numeracy ability as well as language proficiency. It is important to note that qualified professionals are required to administer such assessment instruments.

Links with the local employers are very important and the fostering of relationships with employers should be developed in all areas of education. Involving employers in supporting education and training through initiatives such as sponsorship, scholarships or student awards can be mutually beneficial. Engagement with SOLAS and supporting initiatives such as regional skills awareness and FIT training are to be encouraged. Events such as an Enterprise Road Shows could engage learners from all sectors and foster the ethos of enterprise within education and training activities. In the case of the Adult Guidance Service, it "provides a service to the whole community, working closely with all the relevant statutory and local agencies i.e. Regional Skills Fora, Local Area Partnerships, Citizen Information Centres, Volunteer Centres, MABS, Local Development Programmes and Enterprise Boards)" and "established strong relationships with our colleagues in second level guidance, Youthreach, Further Education Colleges, third level education and the Probation Service" (AEGAI, 2018: 2).

The reduction in guidance provision in schools has resulted in many guidance counsellors having a dual role as teachers. This has often resulted in the guidance department being used for crisis intervention rather than in planned career activities. It is crucial that qualified guidance practitioners are employed to work with students in accessing career guidance tools, as the experience is that such tools are not fully or accurately utilised by students when unsupported. This is particularly true for adult returners to education and there is consensus that basic training is required in the use of online guidance resources for mature students. There appears to be a lack of consistency in the terminology used across various career

guidance tools, which can prove confusing, particularly for mature students and adults returning to education and the recommendation is that plain English versions of such instruments be developed. Similar inconsistencies in terminology exists in how training centres, FE and HE institutions describe course information, entry requirement and progression routes.

There is consensus that the whole area of career guidance and information services is hugely under resourced. Guidance services in schools have seen reductions in the number of hours being allocated directly in line with an increase in the demand on the service, particularly in relation to the mental health of students. Increased administrative workload, particularly in relation to HEAR and DARE applications, has further impacted on the work. Allied to this is an increasing need for self-care for guidance professionals as well as the need for up-to-date CPD in areas such as modern apprenticeships; enterprise; the changing nature of employment practices and new and developing career areas. Where guidance counsellors in schools have a dual role as teachers, this frequently prevents them from attending essential CPD. In fact, the Adult Guidance Service currently has no access to CPD. CPD for all guidance staff should be respectful of the need for work-life balance of the staff also. It is also important that places on the recognised postgraduate programmes in HEIs are expanded to cater for the increasing numbers of teachers wishing to qualify through that route.

Importance of Guidance Support for Career Certaity especially in the FET Sector

The TUI welcomes the emphasis that Government has placed recently in FET options such as apprenticehips. However, it must be remembered that guidance staff play a crucial role in supporting career choice and in giving students access to information about FET options. Mann et al. (2020: 36) found that

"For families, notably those lacking cultural familiarity and social networks relevant to higher education, decision-making about the relative costs and benefits of attending university is difficult. OECD PISA 2018 finds that on average only 43% of disadvantaged students at age 15 reported knowing how to get information about student financing, such as loans or grants,

for higher education – with students more likely to report that they had acquired any such knowledge outside of school (OECD, 2019) (Schleicher, 2019)."

Mann et al go on to state that "VET systems suffer from low status" (2020: 39) and that

"A number of quantitative studies have explored relationships between teenage career uncertainty and participation in career development activities and found positive outcomes linked to involvement (Gutman, 2012) (Gutman, 2014). (Galliot, 2015) for example draw on a survey of 706 Australian students aged 14 to 18 to explore the connection. They find significant associations between career certainty and meeting with a career counsellor in school (2.12 times more likely to be certain than uncertain), participating in career education classes (2.54 times) and taking part in voluntary work experience placements (2.40 times). Visits to universities and vocational colleges were not found to be significantly related to greater incidence of certainty in career aspirations." (2020: 64)

Other Issues for Consideration

- At post-primary, there is too much emphasis on CAO points and processes.
- It is important for guidance counsellors to have access to students undertaking the LCA programme.
- Guidance counsellors need to have time to meet students on a one-to-one basis for guidance support as well as counselling support (as required).
- Peer pressure to 'go to college'.
- Many families cannot afford to allow their child to attend college.
- Consideration should be given to the possibility of expanding the additional inks on the CAO website relating to Apprenticeships and Traineeships to perhaps include a centralised application process as well.
- The profile of apprenticeships needs to be elevated.
- Greater promotion of apprenticeships and traineeships programmes.
- Develop greater links with schools/training centres and employers.
- More time could be given to students, planning to attend tertiary education, to research and compare courses, careers and the possibilities open to them.

- More guidance/vocational planning time is needed for a student who does not have a family history of proactive career planning or progression to 3rd level or identifying the shortfall in their own skills and how to specifically target that.
- At FET level, drop-out occurs for a myriad of reasons;
    - Didn't know what the course was about
    - Peers were going to UL/UCC/UCD etc.
    - Don't like the course
    - The course is perceived as too hard - maths, computers and science in particular
    - Students didn't realise that there are other options
    - Students out of their depth
    - Accommodation costs
    - Students become overwhelmed by relationships.
    - Financial implications of losing SUSI grant

Impact of Covid-19

It would be remiss of us not to mention the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people, as guidance and/or counselling staff in all sectors of the education systema are playing a key role in supporting students at this time. Despite the fact that the pandemic started three years ago, it is unlikely that we have yet experienced the full impact of the pandemic. Some studies have attempted to assess some of the impact (see for example Carroll and McCoy, 2021; OECD, 2020c; Oireachtas, 2021, Dempsey and Burke, 2021, Darmody et al. 2020; NFER, 2022). The general consensus is that the pandemic has had an impact on the academic attainment of most students but that students with SEN or from disadvantaged communities have been hit hardest. However, research also appears to indicate that student performance in literacy and numeracy in particular is recovering across the board. However, it is important to note significant attainment gaps existed before the pandemic (NFER, 2022). MacGiolla Phadraig (2022:1) has noted that the pandemic "highlighted real issues of equality of access to education and brought existing social inequalities into sharp focus".

Waters et al. (2021) have described the enormous impact on mental health that the pandemic has had on educational institutions and their students:

"Schools have also suffered via widespread shutdowns, with up to 91% of the students across globe experiencing remote learning on account of country-wide school closures in 2020 (UNESCO, 2021). Research shows that for many students, the move to remote learning has increased student loneliness (Loades et al., 2020), decreased student wellbeing (Nanigopal et al., 2020), and has harmed learning effectiveness (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020; Di Pietro et al., 2020). The negative effect of school closures is amplified for students who were already experiencing intersecting vulnerabilities (e.g., war, displacement, poverty, and weak healthcare and education systems; Banati et al., 2020). Those who live in marginalized communities or are economically disadvantaged are also at greater risk for negative outcomes due to the 'digital divide' (Eyles et al., 2020) and other factors, such as having no dedicated study space at home or having parents who are more likely to need to travel to work and are more at risk of contracting the virus (Andrews et al., 2020).

At the same time that students are struggling, the rapid move to remote learning has increased the workload and stress of teachers, school staff, and leaders/ administrators (Alves et al., in press; Suryaman et al., 2020) and has put pressure on parents trying to help their children with learning while also working from home (Ahrendt et al., 2020; Fontanesi et al., 2020)."

To compound matters further, research has shown that the burden of difficulties arising from Covid-19 has fallen disproportionately on SEN and disadvantaged student communities (Holt-White et al., 2022; Darmody et al., 2020; SJI, 2021; EEF, 2022). It must also be borne in mind that mental health difficulties were, even before Covid, more likely to occur in students from disadvantaged communities (Kim and Hagquist, 2018; Danielson et al., 2020), and in students with SEN (Cree et al., 2020) than in their peers who do not have SEN and don't come from disadvantaged communities.

As stated by the IGC (2022: 4)

"COVID-19 will have an ongoing impact on the lives of all citizens across the lifespan and the economy, and the labour market challenges experienced by parents will be experienced vicariously by their

children. Further macro-economic pressure of a shock to the Irish labour market will require investment in guidance services and support to aid in recovery from projected labour market turmoil during 2020 (ESRI, March 2020). In-school, FET and Adult services, access to qualified guidance counsellors is of paramount importance so that current LMI be communicated in a non-judgemental, supportive space as we work together to pick up the pieces post pandemic."

Teacher training and development including relevant staff and tertiary education

Similar to the above it is very important that all staff in all recognised education settings have access to training in recognising mental health difficulties and knowing when to refer on to expert mental health support services. It is then essential that the mental health services in the school or college have adequate staffing and further training to be able to deal with the initial difficulties for staff or students. It is vital that a referral, if required, to CAMHS or Adult Mental Health Services receive a timely response, not just a place on a long waiting list. The TUI believes that there may be an almost 'postcode lottery' in terms of how quickly a student, once referred to mental health supports by a counsellor, can actually access meaningful support from a mental health professional. The TUI would like to again reiterate here that that is not the fault of the staff and agencies involved. It is simply a by-product of the enormous caseloads those staff and services are already dealing with. It is important that staff, both in the mental health service in the school/college and in classrooms/lecture halls, be given time and resources to upskill whether that is in counselling/psychological/first responder etc.

Lecturers in HEIs also express concerns about the increase in student numbers presenting to them with mental health issues. It is imperative that lecturing staff receive appropriate training on how to identify problems and refer students to counselling services. Lecturer experiences with the counselling services are very positive but the counselling services are overwhelmed, through no fault of the staff involved. It is important that lecturers, no matter how well intended, do not try to deal with student mental health issues themselves. They are a key point of contact for students experiencing difficulties but are not trained or resourced to deal with serious mental health issues.

Prevention and early intervention

The existence of adequate mental health support services that schools and tertiary education could draw upon would be a very cost effective way of reducing the number of serious mental health issues that may emerge later and perhaps even result in costly (both financially and personally) in-patient treatment. Barry et al. (2017: 5) have noted the cost effectiveness of providing mental health supports in education institutions:

"There is emerging evidence on the economic case for investing in school-based SEL programmes. Belfield et al. (2015) report an average return on investment for SEL programmes of $11 for every dollar invested, while McDaid and Park (2011) report a ratio of 25:1 for high quality programmes that impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing. Knapp et al. (2011) also report that school-based interventions are cost-saving for the public sector based on cost-benefits analyses in the UK, with savings accruing in relation to reduced crime and improved education and employment outcomes. Improved outcomes in relation to earning power as an adult have also been reported for children who received social and emotional skills programmes (Heckman, 2006)."

However, the TUI would like to emphasise yet again that the burden of addressing mental health difficulties, whether in staff or students, cannot fall entirely on schools and colleges. Others also play a key and, in many cases, specialised role. Families must play a role as must society in the widest sense. Furthermore, access to dedicated support teams who work directly with staff and students is an 'absolute must'. In addition to dealing with serious incidents, such dedicated support teams could focus on prevention as well as cure. Currently some CAMHS services are having to prioritise behavioural difficulties over mental health issues. The existence of school/college support teams might alleviate some of this burden. NEPS needs to be involved in schools from the ground up – working with staff but also working with students both individually and in groups. In both schools and tertiary education, pastoral staff such as counsellors and year heads / tutors need to have time to deal with sudden and unexpected student issues as they arise. It would be useful if all staff had the opportunity, if they so wished, to engage in CPD on knowing what warning signs may precede/predict mental health issues in staff or students and then, vitally, knowing when to refer to the relevant supports both in the educational institution and beyond it. It might be useful also for staff and students to be able to download, if they so wished, a phone app which could give them

information about possible signs of when they may need to talk to a school/college staff member or even a mental health professional.

Coordination of services and establishment of links between HSE services and the education system

Schools and colleges rely heavily on support agencies, especially when working with students experiencing crisis. Vulnerable students require the presence of ex quota guidance teachers but also other specialist agencies. Guidance staff in schools, and principal teachers, often find it very difficult to access outside support when needed as the agencies themselves are under significant pressure. Restoration of posts of responsibility is necessary to coordinate the provision of support to students, and to engage in preventative work and in family liaison.

Many of these support services are vital if a student who is suffering a mental health difficulty is to be adequately supported. However, through no fault of the staff in the agencies, there are often unacceptably long waiting lists for student services, assessments and supports. Caseloads for agency staff are often unmanageable. Between June 2022 and December 2022 the number of children waiting for more than a year for an assessment of disability rose by 22% to almost 10,000 children (RTE News, February 6th 2023). As a result, schools and college staff are often left trying to support students as best they can whilst waiting for the student to be able to access expert outside support. For example, in 2015, less than half of the recommended 127 specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) teams had been established, 472 children in care did not have a social worker, 673 children in care did not have a care plan whilst there are 8,161 child protection cases which had not been allocated a social worker including 2,829 deemed 'high priority' (Children's Rights Alliance, 2015). In March 2018, 2,691 children and young adults were waiting for a CAMHS appointment, including 386 who were waiting more than 12 months and 128 who were waiting more than 18 months (Irish Times September 10th, 2018). In January 2019 the situation was only very slightly better with 2,523 children on a HSE CAMHS waiting list (PSI, 2019). By November 2022 the situation had deteriorated dramatically yet again with almost 600 young people waiting over a year for a CAMHS appointment and almost 4000 on a CAMHS waiting list in total (RTE News, January 16th 2023). The Inspector of Mental Health Services has stated that only 49% of HSE mental health rehabilitation teams have been established

(RTE, 10th October 2019). Mental health services overall are short 2,422 whole time equivalents (WTEs) on what government policy said in 2006 was needed (12,354 based on the 2016 census) and some areas, including much of Dublin, have "less than half the staff" deemed to be necessary (Irish Times, December 28th 2019). As noted in a study in Dublin by McCarthy Quinn and Comiskey (2019: 69) only a small number of young people suffering severe emotional stress "are in contact with an agency that can assist, there is known to be a hidden cohort of young people who are not visible to the health services". Children's Commissioner (2021: 2) stated that "a staggering 1 in 6 children now have a probable mental health condition."

In November 2018, 37,473 children were "in some health queue waiting for an assessment for mental health, disability or speech and language problems" (Irish Independent Nov 28th, 2018). Schools are trying to support a child in accessing speech and language therapy for example (Irish Examiner, September 22nd, 2014). Children's Rights Alliance (2018) highlights the 314 children who have been waiting over one year for a speech and language therapy assessment. Furthermore, according to the Childcare Law Reporting Project, in relation to applications for secure care – where a child is detained in a special unit providing specialised care and education where they have very high needs - there are 26 secure care beds in the State "and only 14 of them are available mainly due to staffing problems" (Irish Times, January 13th 2020). In February 2020, a review by the Mental Health Commission concluded that there was "an almost total absence" of community mental health services across the State (RTE News February 19th 2020).

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) has, on a number of occasions, outlined its concerns about inadequate community adolescent mental health services. Indeed, IHREC (2019: 28) stated clearly that

"*There were 6,811 children awaiting a psychology appointment across all Community Healthcare Organisations at the end of July 2017, of which 2,186 were waiting more than a year. There is no primary care psychology service to refer children to in North Dublin*."

In January 2019, there were 29 vacant posts of child and adolescent psychiatrists across the country (RTE News, February 1st, 2019). Furthermore, in a study of 33 countries, Ireland had the seventh highest ratio of students to school psychologists i.e. 5,298:1 as opposed to 927:1 in Denmark for example (Jimerson et al., 2009). The average in the study was 3,709:1. For Ireland to reach reasonable rate of 2500 students per psychologist, taking into account demographic group, would require the employment of 267 more psychologists by 2021 (Impact, 2015). Understaffing in National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has also been a concern in an Oireachtas Committee report (2018).

The latest figures available to the TUI indicate that things have not gotten much better in the thirteen years since. Estimates provided to the TUI by Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB (2022) extrapolated from Oireachtas figures that NEPS may currently have a student to staff ratio of 4142:1. That is drawn from there being 224.5 WTE staff in NEPS and approximately 940,000 students in the system. It should be noted that some ETBs have established their own psychological support services and this is to be welcomed.

In 2017, there were 2,767 children waiting for a first appointment with CAMHS whilst Ireland has the fourth highest incidence of teenage suicide in the European Union (Children's Rights Alliance, 2018). OCO (2018:4) made clear that it is "concerned with staffing problems in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services which means that children experiencing escalating levels of stress and anxiety are often unable to access the emergency supports they need." Two years later OCO (2020: 21) found that "waiting lists for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) remain high, with 2,300 children waiting for an appointment at end of December 2019."

As stated in Downes (2020)

"In France, all pupils have access to the Psychologist of Education for psychological support and career guidance. Emotional counselling is also available in Sweden, where all students

have access to a school doctor, school nurse, psychologist and school welfare officer at no cost and in Slovenia."

Government departments will of course be aware that such a level of provision is still a far-away dream for Irish educators. We need to have genuine ambition for the provision of supports to students in the Irish education system. 'Within existing resources' will simply not suffice.

This is all within the context that during 2014, the then Tusla Chief Executive publicly stated that the Agency required additional funding of €45 million "just to stand still" (Irish Times, December 30th, 2014). Indeed, Tusla (2018) stated that "while additional funding has been agreed for 2018, significant additional funding will be required for 2019 and 2020". Budget 2019 did give Tusla an increase in its budget of €30m to €786m (Irish Examiner October 9th 2018) but gaps remain. As recently as March 2018, Tusla was short almost three hundred social workers (TheJournal.ie March 28th, 2018) and more than 4,000 children who were referred to protection and welfare services were waiting to be allocated a social worker (Irish Independent March 29th, 2018). In 2018 Tusla recruited 150 social workers, but in the same time frame lost 150 social workers through resignation or retirement (Oireachtas, 2019). This was slightly improved in 2020 by way of converting agency staff to Tusla employees.

ESRI (2022c: Executive Summary) has also highlighted the difficulties for young people of all ages trying to access community mental health supports:

"Research has already pointed to the level of unmet need for community mental health services in the population as a whole (Brick et al., 2020). At the age of 20 (in 2018/19), 16 per cent of this cohort who had high depression levels did not consult with a general practitioner, psychologist/counsellor or psychiatrist in the previous year (O'Mahony et al., 2021). During the pandemic, 22 per cent of those classified in the depressed group reported that they did not have 'access to necessary support for emotional or mental health problems'. While policy (see Government of Ireland, 2020) has rightly moved towards emphasising a continuum of support, the scale of difficulties among young adults will place considerable demands on community mental health services."

The IHCA (2020) has stated that

"The HSE does not collect waiting list figures for Adult Mental Health Services. However, nationally the HSE was 7.7% off its target for the number of new adult cases seen in September 2019 and 3% below its target to see 75% of accepted referrals/re-referrals within 3 months."

It also stated that

"HSE data confirms that the number of patients waiting to be seen by a Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist nationally was 1,876 in September 2019, with 36% (668) waiting longer than 6 months and 11% (204) waiting longer than 1 year."

As a result of these waiting lists, mental health support services in education settings are struggling to find referral pathways for students who may require them.

Concerns about mental health, and the adequacy or otherwise of support services have also been expressed in Reilly (2015), Mental Health Reform (2018), Mental Health Commission (2018) and RCSI (2013). The Programme for Government 2016-2018 promised 238 psychologists in NEPS by 2018. In October 2018 there were only 172 wholetime equivalents in post (DES, 2018c). The Committee will note from earlier in this submission that Impact (2015) made clear six years ago that 267 "more" psychologists were needed, not 172 in total. A parliamentary answer (30812/20) on October 15th 2020 set out that the total allocation to NEPS staffing by the end of 2021 would be 251 WTEs. As noted earlier, student numbers in 2022 are considerably higher now than in 2015 and are projected to continue to rise in post-primary and tertiary education as well as FET (SOLAS, 2021; DE, 2021a; DES, 2018d).

RTE News (September 23rd, 2018) reported that less than 10% of the number of staff required for CAMHS intellectual disabilities were in place. In October 2018, 36,531 people were waiting for speech and language therapy (SLT) with a further 32,103 waiting for occupational therapy (OT). One-quarter of those waiting for an OT assessment had been waiting more than a year (Sunday Independent, December 16th, 2018). According to the Mental Health Commission (2020: 17), there are only "98 CAMHS beds nationally: 62 in Dublin, 20 in Galway and 16 in Cork." The DES (2020:3) itself has stated that "the number of referrals (to CAMHS) for 2018 was 18,546 compared to 12,800 in 2011". TASC (2020: 2) has stated that

"Medical health supports are also highly understaffed, with the Psychological Society of Ireland in September 2019 reporting a waiting list of 6,300 children for primary-care assessments and a waiting list of 3,345 adults for counselling (McDaid, 2020)."

As noted by Children's Rights Alliance (2022a:59)

"According to data from the HSE, in February 2022 there were almost 25,000 children on the waiting lists waiting for speech and language therapy, almost half of these children were waiting for an initial assessment. There was over 7,000 children waiting on psychological therapy, and 11,510 waiting on occupational therapy. Of those children waiting for a psychology service, there are 4,166 waiting greater than six months of which 2,421 were waiting greater than 12 months. Over 4,500 children were waiting over a year for occupational therapy. With a gap of 732 posts out of 2,000 roles in disability teams, it is difficult to see how waiting lists will be reduced in the short-term to medium term as the shortage of professionals equates to a loss of 480,000 intervention hours for children on waiting lists."

Children's Rights Alliance (2022a:60) has also noted that

"In April 2022 there 4,003 children and young people on the waiting list for CAMHS compared to 2,919 in April 2021."

Mental health issues for students generally

Prevalence of mental health difficulties is a serious issue not just for the education system but for society as a whole. Guidance counsellors play a key role in education settings in triaging and supporting students experiencing mental health difficulties and then finding pathways to further treatment with HSE services. Jerrim (2022: 330) noted the:

"rising prevalence of such problems across Western societies (Twenge et al., 2019). Mental ill-health during childhood can lead to long-term physical and psychological problems in later life (Clayborne et al., 2019), as well as affecting achievement at school and labour market outcomes (Fergusson & Woodward, 2002). This has led to increased awareness of such problems across the education community (Education Policy Institute, 2020). It has even been

suggested that there may be a reciprocal relationship between the wellbeing of teachers and young people (Spilt et al., 2011), with the mental health of one group impacting the other (Glazzard & Rose, 2019)."

In relation specifically to Ireland, the National Youth Council of Ireland (website, accessed August 3rd 2022) has stated that

"*Findings from research by the Royal College of Surgeons demonstrated that by the age of 13 years, 1 in 3 young people in Ireland are likely to have experienced some type of mental health difficulty. By the age of 24 years, that rate had increased to over 1 in 2. Of particular concern is the fact that the suicide rate for young people aged 15-19 years is the fourth highest in the EU."*

DES (2020: 3) stated that

"A small number of children and young people occasionally experience mental health difficulties to the extent that they cannot function effectively in their daily lives without accessing the Child and Young Person Mental Health Services (CAMHS). There is evidence that demand for CAMHS is increasing with waiting lists in place for initial and follow-up assessments. The number of referrals for 2018 was 18,546 compared to 12,800 in 2011."

It also found that 19,073 children are attending CAMHS (2019 figures) constituting 1.6% of the population under the age of 18 years and that there were 13,177 new referrals to CAMHS in 2018.

Children's Rights Alliance (2021: 98, 99) has found that

"Approximately one in three young people will have experienced some type of mental disorder by the age of 13, with this rate rising to more than one in two by the age of 24 years. While mental health problems are not selective, certain groups of children are at greater risk of poor mental health, including children who have experienced abuse or neglect, including domestic abuse, children living in poverty, children who have experienced discrimination, including homophobia or transphobia, and children with chronic physical health conditions."

DCEDIY (2022) found that in 2020, there were 12 suicides in Ireland amongst children aged 10-17 whilst in 2019 the rate of children and young people aged 10-24 presenting at a hospital emergency department following self-harm was 392 per 100,000.

PCHEI (2022: 3) has stated that

"Global figures portray a continuing increase in the prevalence of mental health and well-being issues in the student population (HEA, 2020) which is mirrored here in Ireland. The My World Survey of young adults (18-25 year olds) who scored in severe or very severe categories for depression increased from 14% in the 2012 study to 21% in the 2019 study, and the prevalence of those in the same categories for anxiety rose from 15% to 26% (Dooley, O'Connor, Fitzgerald & O'Reilly, 2019). The same study shows that 53% of respondents thought that life was not worth living compared to 43% in the first My World Survey in 2012."

As cited by Cullinan et al. (2019: 3)

"Data provided by the Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education in Ireland indicates that the proportion of students availing of counselling services has increased from 4% in 2008 to 7% in 2016, while expenditure on mental health services per student within Irish HEIs has fallen from €34.63 to €31.75 over the period 2009–2016."

IGC (2022:4) made similar findings to PCHEI/Children's Rights Alliance etc in saying

"The current generation of students have unprecedented high levels of anxiety and mental health issues (AHEAD 2018; OECD, 2017; Mental Health Commission 2018; Unicef 2017). This was already our reality pre pandemic, post pandemic students anxiety levels are through the roof."

In a recent UK study, the Children's Commissioner (2022) found that between one in five and two in five children were not happy with their mental health. The report also found that one in six children had a probable mental health disorder, compared to one in nine in 2017.

Cullinan et al. (2019) has found that need can sometimes be concentrated in certain groups, for example, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Other research internationally

has made similar findings and indeed has also shown a reluctance amongst people to seek help. For example, as cited by Cullinan et al. (2019: 2)

"McLafferty et al. [21] provided base line estimates and 12-month prevalence rates for a range of mental health issues among higher education students in Northern Ireland. Females, students over 21 years of age, those with a lower income, and non-heterosexual students were found to have the highest rates of mental health problems. Using a mixed-methods approach, Deasy et al. [22] found a high prevalence of significant psychological distress among undergraduate nursing/midwifery and teacher education students. However, despite the distress experienced, students were reluctant to engage with support services, with many actively avoiding seeking help."

Cullinan et al. (2019:10) find that

"students from the lowest social class and students with the greatest difficulty in making ends meet have the highest rates of unmet need overall, but that these disparities disappear once we control for mental ill-health. This implies that socioeconomic disparities in unmet need are driven by higher rates of mental ill-health among those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. With increasing numbers of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds entering higher education in Ireland, the implication is that the overall need for campus mental health services will continue to rise. Indeed, there is evidence that the demand for, and utilisation of, services has increased considerably in recent years."

Education settings can play an important role in supporting students, staff and families in relation to mental health. However, they cannot do it on their own. They need support from those same families and also from the wider community and taxpayer if mental health is to be addressed satisfactory. It is also essential that support services be adequately resourced in order to provide specialist assistance as required. In writing about a specific school initiative Barry et al. (2017: 3) noted that:

"The school is a unique setting within which young people's social and emotional wellbeing can be promoted and critical skills for school, work and life can be taught and learned. A broad range of skills, including cognitive, social and emotional skills, are needed by young people to develop positively and be successful in life."

Discussion of mental health difficulties has sometimes revolved around whether it peaks in certain years in schools or is triggered by particular events such as exams (see for example Wright et al., 2020 or Roome and Soan, 2019). However, Jerrim (2022: 330) found that the *"growth in mental health problems as young people progress through secondary school…seems to be driven by the effects of age, rather than due to movement into more senior school year groups"*.

These mental health difficulties existed long before the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has made matters considerably worse, as noted above by the IGC (2022). As noted by the ESRI (2022c: Executive Summary)

"The scale of mental health difficulties among young adults, particularly young women, is of significant concern. Given the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, it is difficult to determine how long-lasting these effects will be. The findings point to two main groups of young adults who are particularly vulnerable: those who experienced depression before the pandemic and continued to do so during the pandemic; and those for whom the disruption caused by the pandemic resulted in depressive symptoms. It is too early to say how long-lasting these effects will be but there appears to be a considerable risk of a longer-term scarring effect for some groups of young adults."

In a similar vein Eurofound (2021: 4) has stated that

"There is increasing evidence that – as a result of social distancing measures, travel restrictions and lockdowns – the COVID-19 pandemic has generated a parallel pandemic of mental health problems, with greater vulnerability among young people and alarming implications for their emotional and social functioning."

The impact of Covid has also been highlighted by the PCHEI (2022). It found that 12,852 students attended tertiary education student counselling services in 2019/20. This rose 12% to 14,386 just one year later. The PCHEI (2022: 4) has clearly stated that in tertiary education *"The average ratio of counsellor to students was reduced from 1 counsellor per 3,000 students in 2019, to 1 counsellor per 2,500 students in 2021. The recommended ratio according to international standards is 1 counsellor to 1,000 students (IACS, 2010)."*

The TUI is committed to supporting meaningful measures that support students who experience mental health difficulties and their teachers/lecturers who educate them but who can also experience mental health difficulties of their own."

Despite the above, there is at least some limited grounds for hope as UNICEF (2020), has found that

- Ireland ranks 11th out of 41 countries for child wellbeing.
- Ireland ranks 13th of those 41 countries for quality education.

However, education settings can only address issues which arise in, or directly impact on, school/college life. Schools and colleges cannot be held accountable for matters which arise outside of their jurisdiction. In addressing such issues, schools and colleges need to have access to qualified personnel. It is deeply regrettable that some schools are using 'out of field' staff to deal with serious guidance issues. As noted by the IGC (2020), 22.4% of schools report using unqualified internal staff to deliver guidance counselling. This could be alleviated to some extent by increasing the number of places on the relevant CPD courses provided in the HEIs. The TUI has received reports that some schools have no qualified guidance counsellor at all, sometimes for several years, and that this difficulty is more common in small schools and/or Irish-language schools. The restoration of ex quota guidance allocations would support such small and/or Irish language schools if they had, for example, a minimum allocation of a half time post or full-time post that might be attractive to possible applicants. Currently some schools can't even guarantee having a half-time post available to qualified guidance counsellors to even apply for.

School mental health support

Education settings require support from relevant agencies with expertise in these areas if the school is to adequately support the affected students, both those bullied and those carrying out the bullying. As will be clear from other sections of this submission, those supports to students are frequently lacking. Cuts to pastoral supports in schools, such as guidance and middle management, have also made it difficult for schools to support students in these difficult situations. The loss of pastoral supports such as Assistant Principal positions, is a

situation that the DES (2014) itself has described as “unsustainable”. Sadly little has changed, in relation to middle management posts, in the last seven years to make the situation any less “unsustainable”. Furthermore, the focus of many posts has been on administration and bureaucracy. Numbers of posts of responsibility have also not kept pace with ongoing rises in student numbers (DE, 2021a), and student needs in terms of pastoral care and administration.

This is a particular difficulty in DEIS schools. As stated in DCYA (2020), in 2018 almost 190,000 children were living in income poverty (60% median income) and almost 89,000 children were living in deep poverty. The number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Ireland was a staggering 302,000, which is actually a reduction of 110,000 from the 2010 figures. Educational disadvantage has been a serious problem for some time in Ireland. Existing initiatives have made some in-roads but much more needs to be done. Many studies have mapped the extent of the problem and offered possible solutions. However, it is unlikely that any radical improvement can be expected until there is an increase in educational investment in areas such as pastoral supports, further education, and school level supports. Investment in home school liaison support is also necessary. Due to the high level of childhood deprivation in Ireland, and rising student numbers it is not possible to achieve success in the above “within existing resources”.

The lack of integrated inclusive supports on-site in schools such as nurses, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists etc makes truly inclusive education a dream rather than a reality. There is a pilot programme, the School Inclusion Model, which is being piloted in some schools. The TUI is cautiously optimistic of the prospects of such a programme and looks forward to the forthcoming research report on the pilot scheme. However, the needs of the health system means that many of the occupational therapists and speech and language therapists assigned to the pilot programme in schools were then reassigned to Covid-related work within the HSE. This is understandable given the sudden and dramatic needs that Covid placed on the health system but the TUI fears that the pilot is, and will continue to be, meaningless without on-site support – the type of support

the pilot was originally designed to provide. It should perhaps be noted here that as stated by the EU Commission (2020:64)

"All students have access to a school doctor, school nurse, psychologist and school welfare officer at no cost in Sweden."

That is but a dream to Irish schools and colleges.

The enormous depletion of middle management posts in our schools since 2009 (data provided by the DoE Payroll section to the TUI in September 2022; Irish Independent, April 8th, 2016) has been very corrosive. It has resulted in a reduction of supports to vulnerable students. The axing of large numbers of posts coincided with an increased demand for supports for students. In 2018 the number of posts was partially restored but only to a level of half of that pertaining prior to the cuts. This minimal restoration was described by the DES at the time as partial and a commencement. Recent recommendations from the Oireachtas (2023) would, if implemented, go a considerable way to minimising the ongoing crisis in middle management in schools which are simultaneously experiencing rising student numbers (DE, 2021a).

Furthermore, to appropriately address issues of mental health all members of the school/college community should be provided with adequate training to allow them to deal with both parties in a compassionate and constructive manner.

Further and higher education mental health support

Mental health supports are vitally important to students in tertiary education. PCHEI (2022) has found that the main mental health issues for students include anxiety, low mood / depression, and relationships / family. Mental health support services in tertiary education provide a twelve-month provision. They are especially busy at transition points such as the start of the academic year, and also at exam times. Similarly, in post-primary there is a need for first year students, exam year students and student making the transition to Senior Cycle to be able to access supports for mental health and to promote good attendance. However, Counsellors in the tertiary sector also need to be available to students during holiday times and this is particularly important for post-graduate students who often follow a different

college timeline to their under-graduate colleagues. However, it is difficult for students to access community-based supports when they return home as they are routinely expected by the HSE to register for mental health supports at home or at college, but not both. This can be problematic if a student experiences a mental health difficulty at home during a holiday time for example, especially if they are also registered with counselling services in college. The TUI strongly believes that the student should be able to access mental health supports when, and where, needed.

Mental health support services in tertiary education are significantly under-staffed in terms of counsellors, pastoral staff and those with special responsibility for supporting students with SEN. The PCHEI (2022) has recommended that almost thirty more mental health staff are required in third level in order to meet internationally recognised staff/student ratios. This is even before we take account of expected rises in third level student enrolment (DES, 2018d). It also doesn't take account of expected rises in the number of student seeking support from mental health services in terms of the impact of the pandemic on, for example, student social skills.

In addition to their day-to-day work, mental health support staff in colleges are involved in developing resources to support staff and students, to planning for possible critical incidents, in conducting research with the HSE, provided training such as bystander and first-responder training, and in supporting whole-campus approaches. It is vitally important that there be enough staff available to provide the above but also to enable 'walk-in' sessions for students who are suddenly experiencing difficulty and simply can't wait for an appointment to see a trained expert.

It has proven difficult recently to recruit and retain staff in mental health services in tertiary education. This is especially the case for sessional work. It is very important that staff be able to access full-time permanent contracts with standardised terms and conditions and pay scales. Otherwise we will continue to struggle with issues of recruitment and retention. This

is also an issue within the wider mental health sector. Whilst issues of pay and conditions within the wider mental health sector is not within the remit of the TUI, we can say that those issues are creating difficulties in the extent of service being given to both post-primary and tertiary education students.

Similarly, in relation to CAMHS, DES (2020: 13) has found:

"difficulties in sourcing required medical staff. In addition, measures to accommodate young people with complex needs, including significant behavioural challenges, can have an impact on overall bed capacity, as other beds in the units may be closed down to ensure the safety of young people and staff."

TASC (2020: 2) has made similar findings

"Medical health supports are also highly understaffed, with the Psychological Society of Ireland in September 2019 reporting a waiting list of 6,300 children for primary-care assessments and a waiting list of 3,345 adults for counselling (McDaid, 2020)."

As recently as January 2023 an interim review of CAMHS found "lack of staff with high turnover, lack of capacity to provide needs-based therapeutic programmes, poor monitoring of medication, lack of clinical governance, and long waiting lists" as well as, in some cases, a reliance on "tele-psychiatry" (Irish Times, January 22rd, 2023). It must be remembered that this is the service schools often rely on to support students, though it must again be pointed out hat the TUI that our colleagues in CAMHS work extraordinarily hard and any gaps in service to young people are due to CAMHS staff trying valiantly to cope with utterly unmanageable case loads.

An additional problem which manifests in mental health support for students over the age of 18 is that when they are referred to the Adult Mental Health Service they may be told that their difficulties, as defined by their general practitioner or college support service, do not

reach the threshold of 'major mental illness'. On occasion this has included students referred with a borderline personality disorder or drug/alcohol abuse. This is deeply unsatisfactory. The TUI would like to make clear that it is not criticising the staff in the Adult Mental Health Service. The difficulty rests in different interpretations of 'major mental illness' and on the already utterly unmanageable caseloads of staff.

The FET sector must not be forgotten in this examination of student mental health supports. The FET sector is almost as large as the HE sector. In 2020 there were 151,630 enrolments in FET (SOLAS, 2021). It provides courses geared for local need in every town and city in the country. Those enrolments are split almost exactly equally between full-time and part-time. As noted by the IGC (2022: 5)

"The FET sector is an important provider of lifelong career guidance. It is essential that guidance and supports are integrated by all FET providers and this is underpinned by a code of practice. This should incorporate guidance provided within individual further education and training bodies as well as access to the proposed new centralised services proposed as part of the Indecon review. Adult Education Guidance Services are currently available in the 16 ETBs and information is provided both to the public and to the adults in FET. Links with DEASP-INTREO and Learner Guidance Services across FET are critical in helping adults progress to employment. The proposed code of practice for integrated guidance services in FET should be aligned with the Guidance for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance from the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (EGPLN). A key objective should be to provide a consistent level of career guidance regardless of location or type of FET programme. (Indecon Review of Career Guidance – Final Report; p66)."

As a consequence of the above, significant additional staffing is required in the Adult Education Guidance Service. It is also important that the broad role of adult guidance be recognised and that it not be reduced to solely a labour market initiative. It is vitally important that learners in FET also have access to a broad range of guidance/counselling supports as required. It is also important that services such as Youthreach have access to mental health supports. For example, Youthreach centres in some counties have access to an international

evidence-based model of support on developing 'thinking skills'. However, the programme is not available in other counties.

Conclusion

Guidance services play a key role in all sectors of the Irish education system. The ey support labour market initiatives, mental health supports, FE and He access, migrant communities, socio-economically deprived communities, AEN/SEN students, EAL and ESOL students and they help to prevent early school leaving. They also engage in critical work planning for and addressing urgent issues such as Covid-19 and migration from war zones.

Guidance and/or counselling staff in post-primary/FET/HE have contributed significantly to Ireland having an extraordinarily low level of early school leaving and an extraordinarily high level of tertiary education. However, as the economy continues to grow it is likely that increased employment opportunities for young people will create a 'pull factor' away from full-time education. Hence, it is essential that both the DoE and DFHERIS invest vigorously in the services needed to prevent early school leaving, support those seeking to upskill, and support young people who have left the mainstream education system already. It is also vital that guidance services be able to students who are encountering personal difficulties. For those reasons it is essential that significant additional staffing be available to guidance services in schools, colleges of further education, higher education and the adult education sector.

Recommendations

The TUI would like to make the following recommendations to the Committee:

- Mental health in education settings should be taken seriously and appropriate investment made in it for both students and staff. The extent to which we see this as a priority must be reflected in actual investment in it. Approximately €35 million annually could make a very large difference. This would be split between tertiary supports (€7.5m including existing Covid supports), post-primary and FET supports (€7.5m) and restoration of posts of responsibility (€20m approximately).

- It is essential that vital support structures within schools be restored. This includes, but is not limited to, guidance support and middle management posts.
- Significant investment is needed in out of school supports such as CAMHS.
- Whilst recent changes in guidance provision (Circular 12/2017) and middle management posts (Circular 3/2018) are a small step in supporting students in difficulty, a much larger move in terms of full restoration of both is needed. There should be at least one full-time ex quota guidance teacher in every post-primary school with additional allocation for schools with larger student numbers. Full restoration of allocations of posts of responsibility to pre-recession levels should also be achieved urgently.
- Funding, including temporary Covid-related funding, of mental health supports in tertiary education should be mainstreamed and increased to account for rising student numbers.
- Staffing in NEPS should be expanded to allow for greater one-to-one support for students from NEPS psychologists.
- The number of counsellors/psychologists in tertiary education support services should be increased to the international recommendation of one per 1000 students.
- Additional guidance resources should be provided, over and above national norms, to education (whether post-primary, FET or HE) settings with above average proportions of students coming from migrant, ESOL, EAL, SEN, ESL or socio-economic disadvantaged communities.
- Training should be provided to teachers and lecturers in how best to refer on students and how to interface with the appropriate services.
- The recommendations of the recent Oireachtas Committee report on mental health supports in schools and tertiary education should be implemented as soon as possible.
- There should be sufficient staffing in all necessary mental health support services in education to allow time to meet all student needs.
- There also should be sufficient staffing to allow mental health staff, in conjunction with school and college staff, to plan for critical incidents in case they may occur.

- Contracts, especially in FET and higher education settings, should be sufficiently attractive to ameliorate the current difficulties in both recruitment and retention of highly trained staff.
- The HSE should allow students to access community mental health services in their community during holiday periods and to access education setting mental health support during term time, and vice versa.
- Staff be able to access full-time permanent contracts with standardised terms and conditions and pay scales.
- Any attempt by Government to change job contracts will be fiercely opposed by the TUI.
- Consideration should be given to which definition of 'major mental illness' is most appropriate.
- The postcode lottery of access to community mental health services should end.
- Significant additional staffing should be provided to the Adult Education Guidance Service. It is also important that the broad role of adult guidance be recognised and that it not be reduced to solely a labour market initiative.
- Learners in FET should have access to a broad range of guidance/counselling supports as required. For example, services such as Youthreach should have access to mental health supports and also international evidence-based models of support on developing 'thinking skills'.
- All education staff should have access to mental health support programmes for themselves and also for the support of their students. Some such programmes are cost neutral.
- There should be access to dedicated support teams who work directly with staff and students could focus on prevention over cure.
- NEPS must be involved in schools from the ground up – working with staff but also working with students both individually and in groups.
- In both schools and tertiary education, pastoral staff such as counsellors and year heads / tutors should have time to deal with unexpected student issues as they arise.
- It would be useful if all staff had the opportunity, if they so wished, to engage in CPD on knowing what warning signs may precede/predict mental health issue in staff or

students and then, vitally, knowing when to refer to the relevant supports both in the educational institution and beyond it.

- Consideration should be given to the possibility of staff and students being able to download, if they so wished, a phone app which could give them information about possible signs of when they may need to talk to a school/college staff member or even a mental health professional.
- Consideration must be taken of the impact of the Covid pandemic on educational institutions, their staff, their students and their family groups.
- The number of places on guidance counsellor CPD courses in the HEIs should rise.
- All schools should have a minimum allocation guidance hours given to them so that small and/or Irish language schools can at least have a half-time or full-time guidance post to fill.

Ends

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Glossary

AEGAI	Adult Education Guidance Association of Ireland
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
CAO	Central Applications Office
C&C	Community and Comprehensive
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs (now DCEDIY)
DDLETB	Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB
DE	Department of Education (Now DoE)
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills (Now DoE)
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DoE	Department of Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ERC	Educational Research Centre
ESL	Early School Leaver
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education and Training Board

EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FET	Further Education and Training
FIT	Fast-track into Information Technology
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
HSE	Health Service Executive
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOT	Institute of Technology
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCE	Leaving Certificate Examination
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
L+N	Literacy and Numeracy
MABS	Money Advice and Budgeting Service
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NERI	Nevin Economic Research Institute

NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PIRLS	Programme in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SJI	Social Justice Ireland
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TU	Technological University
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
UK	United Kingdom
UL	University of Limerick
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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