

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH MEMORANDUM OF REPLY: ACTION PLAN

UPDATE: DECEMBER 2024

Rec	Departmental Commitment	Action taken (to December 2024)	Target date	Status
1.	At the Mental Health Strategic Reform Board meeting in May 2024 there was agreement on the need to take a longer review and several pieces of work were commissioned. This will be used to review and take a wider look at the overall deliverability of the Strategy.	Following discussion at the Mental Health Strategy Operational Delivery Board in October 2024 and a further meeting of the Strategic Reform Board in November 2024, exercises have been commissioned with Strategy Action Owners to consider the overall timeframes for actions, the identification of key milestones, and linkages and interdependencies with other Actions. This work will inform workshops with partners and stakeholders arranged for January 2025 at which the deliverability of the Strategy will be considered.	Jun 2025	On track to complete

1.contd.	There are a number of action plans with timescales in place for key Mental Health Strategy (MHS) enabling actions with work already ongoing to develop others which will be finalised this year. All of the action plans will be reviewed and revised if necessary to ensure that the actions being committed to are deliverable within the funding and resources available.	As above, the preparatory work by Action Owners and workshops planned for January 2025 are with a view to revising actions plans for 2025/26 in line with anticipated funding available as well as considering what the priorities would be should additional funding be allocated.	Jun 2025	On track to complete
2.	Work to inform the development of a co-produced implementation plan to deliver the recommendations in the Workforce Review is underway. The requirement to fully cost the proposed workforce profile has been identified as a priority and will be taken forward as part of the implementation plan for 2024-25.	<p>A comprehensive implementation plan for the Mental Health workforce review will be finalised by end December 2024, setting out key actions and milestones, timeframes and action owners and delivery partners. The implementation plan, which has been coproduced with a broad range of key stakeholders, outlines the priority actions for delivery in 2024/25, including progressing recommendations 1 and 2 to (i) evaluate the cost of future workforce profiles and (ii) establish a task and finish group to prioritise service and plan recruitment.</p> <p>Draft Terms of Reference for the task and finish group have been developed and it is anticipated that the first meeting of the group will be convened in early January 2025. It is recognised that several of the actions in the implementation plan will be dependent on future budget availability.</p> <p>A number of other actions have been progressed to address workforce challenges specifically in relation to psychiatry and psychology workforce challenges. Discussions are ongoing between Departmental</p>	Jun 2025	On track to complete

		officials, HSC Trust Mental Health Directors and the Royal College of Psychiatry to identify a range of actions to address and alleviate recruitment and retention pressures across the medical workforce in the short to medium term. An action plan has been agreed and progress will be monitored on an ongoing basis. In addition, a recruitment exercise was launched on 2 December to appoint a Chief Psychological Professions Officer within the Department. It is anticipated that, once that individual is in place, they will take a lead role in identifying and addressing workforce challenges across the psychology profession.		
2.contd.	While it is anticipated that the general Workforce Review Implementation Plan will be in place by early Autumn 2024, some of the more detailed elements of the Committee's recommendation on costs and agreement of training places, which coincide with delivery of recommendations 1 and 2 of the Workforce Review, as outlined above, will take some further time to deliver. DoH is however in the process of establishing a task & finish group to progress this work by June 2025 as indicated above.	As above	Jun 2025	On track to complete
3.	Action 10 of the Mental Health Strategy sets out DoH's commitment to increase the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) budget to 10 per cent of the adult mental health budget and DoH remains committed to this objective but this is dependent on budget allocations.	The financial position remains challenging so there has been no opportunity to allocate additional funding in year. Whilst bids have been submitted for the 25/26 budget the outcome of this is not yet known.	Mar 2025	On track to complete

4.	DoH would be pleased to update the Committee on the progress of the first phase of this work (collection of outcome data) in 12 months' time.	The Regional Mental Health Service Team is providing quarterly progress updates to DoH as part of Strategy governance arrangements and will provide a more detailed update to the Committee on the first phase of work to collect outcome data in June 2025 as agreed.	June 25 for update	On track to complete
4 contd	<p>The first phase of the implementation of the Mental Health Outcomes Framework (MHOF) is currently ongoing and involves two key objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• embedding the MHOF in the design and build of Encompass, the new regional digital patient record system; and</li> <li>• establishing the capacity to report robust regional data on mental health service activity.</li> </ul>	<p>To date, 30 of the 45 Mental Health Outcomes Framework measures have been embedded onto the Encompass system. For the remaining measures, legal advisers are providing legal advice on copyright and licensing requirements of providers.</p> <p>Responding to capacity pressures within the Encompass programme, a prioritisation exercise has been conducted for the outstanding measures. Encompass has indicated a capacity to embed two measures per month and work is ongoing to progress this.</p> <p>Work is ongoing in developing regional performance and activity reporting structures and arrangements for mental health services on the Encompass system. This is complex due to the variations in structures and pathways across Trusts. However, mapping of Trust services to a common service template has been completed for SEHSCT, BHSCT &amp; NHSCT. Mapping for SHSCT and WHSCT is scheduled for early 2025 in advance of the Encompass being roll out to these areas.</p> <p>A regional reference group has been established, including Trust Mental Health Clinical and Informatics Leads, as well as representatives from SPPG, DoH Informatics and Encompass. This</p>	<i>Target date for this (i.e. reporting activity and performance data) is 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2026</i>	Some delay but should complete

		group is addressing emerging definitional, pathway and service issues to support Encompass technical staff in specifying and designing the regional reporting system.		
4 contd	The plan for the MHOF implementation is that this first phase will be completed by Quarter 1 2026.	The Encompass system is the key enabler for the delivery of the MHOF and its implementation timeline is intimately linked to the Encompass rollout schedule. As Encompass has been rolled out, some elements of MHOF implementation have been moved to the Optimisation Phase, which, given this is a future phase, may lead to delays in full implementation within previously anticipated deadlines. To address this, senior colleagues from SPPG and DoH are actively exploring solutions to escalate these issues within the existing Encompass governance structures, ensuring the MHOF is fully integrated into their build programme.	Q1 2026	Some delay but should complete
4 contd	The second phase of the implementation of the MHOF involves supporting mental health professionals and services in the use of the outcomes measures embedded in the Encompass build under phase 1. It is through this primary use of outcomes measures by mental health staff in supporting their clinical practice, that data is generated which can be collated into regional reports on outcomes for mental health service users.	<p>The second phase of the MHOF implementation will commence following completion of phase 1, in line with the full regional rollout of the Encompass programme across Trusts.</p> <p>This work will be led by the MHOF Regional Programme Lead. There have been delays to recruitment to this position as the post was not filled during the interview process which took place in November and so needs to be re-advertised, which will be done shortly. At this stage, it is anticipated, the post will be filled by the end of the current financial year.</p> <p>Second phase implementation also requires the recruitment of Mental Health Outcomes Framework Leads in each Trust to support mental health</p>	<i>Target date for this is (i.e. regional reporting of outcomes data) is the 3rd Quarter 2026</i>	Some delay but should complete

		services and practitioners in integrating outcomes measurement into their clinical practice. However, funding for these five posts has not yet been secured.		
4 contd	The further roll out of the MHOF will be progressed by the regional mental health service, through a programme co-designed and agreed with clinical leadership and service users through to the fourth quarter of 2029.	Work on this will follow the completion of second phase.	<i>Timeframe for this will follow on from phase 2 date of 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2026 through to fourth quarter 2029</i>	On track to complete
5.	<p>The establishment of the Regional Mental Health Service (RMHS) under Action 31 of the MHS sees the creation of a RMHS Business Unit. The Business Unit will have devolved to it regional responsibility for the MHOF with a key role in the collation, analysis and presentation of data and intelligence across the Regional Mental Health system to support assurance and inform decision-making by the RMHS leadership Collaborative Board and the HSC Integrated Care System.</p> <p>Funding has been identified by DoH to progress the establishment of the RMHS Business Unit in this current financial year and initial work has recently commenced to scope how the new reporting arrangements being put in place via Encompass will support the work of the Unit. This work will include identifying and addressing any gaps in relation to mental</p>	<p>The permanent staffing structure for the RMHS Business Unit has been finalised, with the Head of the Regional Mental Health Service and Regional Service User Consultant having now been appointed. As previously noted, recent recruitment exercise for the MHOF Lead was unsuccessful and so will be re-advertised shortly. Recruitment for other permanent positions is expected to conclude by the end of the financial year.</p> <p>In the interim, a small temporary team has been put in place to support work on the Regional Mental Health Service, including identifying gaps in current mental health data.</p>	June 25 for completion of review	Some delay but should complete

	health outcomes data so that these are addressed before Encompass is fully embedded.			
6	<p>The Health and Social Care Data Strategy NI 2022-2030 includes a commitment to the establishment of a HSC Data Institute (HSCDI) with a mission that “HSC will make health and care data easily available to our population, our people and policy makers, facilitated and governed by a new Health and Social Care Data Institute (HSCDI)”.</p> <p>The RMHS Business Unit will work with the HSCDI and Digital Health and Care NI in developing technical solutions for reporting requirements, including automation of reports and processes, and the development of data visualization tools, outcomes-based accountability reporting and regional dashboards.</p>	<p>DHCNI is leading the establishment of a Data Institute and an Analytics and Insight Group has been formed to develop its work programme.</p> <p>The RMHS Business Unit, when fully established, will engage with colleagues to identify the most effective mechanisms for leveraging support from the Data Institute, via the Analytics and Insight Group. This collaboration will focus on aligning efforts with ongoing work to develop MHOF metrics and reporting capabilities.</p>	Jun 25	Some delay but should complete
7.	DoH is committed to improving the quality of referrals and ensuring that referrals are made where appropriate, whilst reducing the number of inappropriate referrals by supporting potential referrers to have a common understanding of the threshold criteria. DoH accepts that referral rates vary across HSC Trusts and will request that each Trust undertakes an 18-month audit of referrals not accepted from January 2023 - June 2024.	<p>DoH instructed Trust to complete audit and return findings to SPPG no later than 20th December 2024 for regional analysis.</p> <p>On the 19th November 2024 all Trusts advised SPPG work was progressing and results would be returned to SPPG by due date.</p>	Dec 24	On track to complete

8.	DoH is committed to ensuring that these programmes and initiatives are providing sufficient, early support to those children in need and that they are making a difference. Therefore, a review of the MHS Early Intervention and Prevention Plan will be taken forward to assess its effectiveness in meeting its objectives.	An extraordinary meeting of the EI&P Steering group is scheduled for Feb 25 to discuss progress against Action 7 within the EI&P action plan which relates to children and young people. The outcomes from this session will identify opportunities for better connectivity across the areas of work underway and help to prioritise specific actions within a refreshed EI&P action plan.	Jun 25	On track to complete
8 contd	DoH will consider whether any additional support could be put in place to prevent conditions escalating and ultimately becoming more challenging to treat as highlighted by the Committee.	This will form part of the discussion at the meeting referenced above	Jun 25	On track to complete
8 contd	Work is being led by the Strategic Planning and Performance Group within DoH to develop a DoH Children & Young People's Emotional Health & Wellbeing Framework. This draft framework is in the final stages of development and will be subject to public consultation.	The SPPG draft framework will form part of the discussion at the meeting referenced above.	Jun 25	On track to complete
9.	DoH will review the data regarding waiting times in mental health and psychological therapies services across all five Trust areas, and engage with each of the Health & Social Care Trusts to understand the reasons for patients waiting longer than the extant Ministerial maximum waiting time targets in order to identify and agree specific actions required to address and reduce waiting times in mental health. While DoH is content to report to the Committee in six	SDP monitoring is ongoing to March 2025. Trusts are being asked to demonstrate evidence of service improvement plans to reduce waiting times at monthly performance meetings	March 25	On track to complete

	months' time on any progress in reducing waiting lists, DoH would wish to highlight that at this stage it is clear that the 2024-25 budget allocated to DoH will not facilitate a reduction in waiting lists within the next twelve months.			
10.	A working definition of crisis has been agreed regionally and a regional meeting held with all key stakeholders to plan the next steps. DoH (in cooperation with the Public Health Agency) is establishing a regional crisis team to lead this work and a regional workshop will be held in October 2024 to begin to standardise regionally consistent solutions and services.	Working definition of crisis has been agreed regionally with key stakeholders, but with appreciation that this is a complex area. SPPG and PHA have established a core team to progress the regional crisis work. Additional staff to be recruited by PHA as part of this regional crisis team. The October workshop was very successful with a draft crisis pathway tabled and discussed. Proposals to be presented to the Crisis Regional Oversight Group on 20.12.24 to stand up Liaison and Crisis Response Home Treatment care network to progress necessary work on standardisation.	March 25	Some delay but should complete
10 contd	With respect to the Multi Agency Triage Teams (currently only operational in two Trust areas) and the NI Ambulance Service pilot initiative to include mental health professionals in their control rooms, DoH needs to await the receipt of the evaluations to consider how best to proceed with this regionally. Any implementation however of these crisis services will be dependent upon evaluations which indicate positive outcomes and available investment for regional roll out.	Consultation has occurred with NIAS in relation to Hear and Treat service with slippage allocation for continuation of service to allow evaluation and future planning of best method of mental health care at point of contact with NIAS. MATT remains in place within two Trusts but evaluation is needed for comparison with Hear and Treat to plan future service.	March 25	Some delay - as neither evaluation will be available for DOH review before March 2025, due to staff absence in one of the services concerned.

11.	Increased collaboration between Departments of Health and Education.	There continues to be significant close collaboration and engagement between DoH and DE to support the emotional wellbeing of children and young people, with both Departments working in partnership to manage the implementation of the Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework, within the constraints of reducing budgets in both 2023/24 and 2024/25.	Ongoing programme of work	Ongoing
12.	In March 2024, DoH, working alongside DoJ, established a multiagency task and finish group to coordinate the response to the Coroner's findings with regards to tragic deaths in 2017, with a view to ensuring a coordinated, focused response that addresses each of the recommendations made by the Coroner and ensures that vital lessons are learned from the case. The work of the task and finish group is expected to be completed by April 2025.	Significant progress has been made to address the findings of the Coroner's report on the Cawdery inquest. Since establishment of the Cawdery Task & Finish Group in March 2024, an implementation plan has been agreed, setting out key actions and delivery timeframes across 3 workstreams, which is setting a framework to monitor and report on progress. In particular, considerable work has been progressed across workstream 1 (to undertake a review of the Serious Adverse Incident (SAI) action plan into the Cawdery case and workstream 2 (to undertake a comprehensive review of mental health legislation and guidance). It is anticipated that the work of the Cawdery Task & Finish Group will largely be completed by April 2025.	April 25	On track to complete
12 contd	DoH will continue to work closely with PSNI counterparts as the Right Care Right Person is shaped and delivered in the coming months.	It is recognised that a similar robust joined up approach to the rollout of Right Care Right Person (RCRP) is essential in order to manage and minimise any impact of implementation on already stretched services, while ensuring that the most vulnerable in society are protected. In order to ensure that the approach to RCRP implementation is planned and developed through cross-agency partnerships a RCRP Strategic Oversight Group	Timescales for implementation of RCRP to be determined in partnership with DoJ, PSNI & HSC partners.	On track to complete

		has been established, chaired jointly by DoH and DoJ, and met for the first time in October 2024. The focus of the Oversight Group is to identify and address the required operational change, while recognising and respecting the operational independence of PSNI, and ensuring effective future partnership working between all relevant statutory partners in the delivery of health and social care, including mental health care. Sitting underneath the Strategic Oversight Group, a 'Silver' Operational Group, co-chaired by PSNI and DoH, is being stood up to progress delivery of the RCRP proposals, with the first meeting scheduled in December 2024.		
13.	DoH is planning to commission a review of its engagement with the community and voluntary (C&V) sector in early Autumn 2024. This work will sit alongside other work DoH is carrying out to ensure that it is engaging with the sector across a range of key areas in an optimal way and specifically in order to implement Actions 17, 31 and 32 of the MHS.	Following a successful procurement exercise in the autumn 2024, a contract for the carrying out of the review has been awarded and the review is to commence mid Dec 24 and complete by end March 25.	March 25	On track to complete
14.	DoH will shortly commission an exercise to assess the skillset, capacity and knowledge within the Community & Voluntary sector to support the delivery of mental health services, and as part of that exercise, relevant actions and recommendations of the MHS will be revisited in order to ensure timely and effective implementation. As part of this exercise, DoH will consider and set out how it can improve its engagement with	As above.	March 25	On track to complete

	the C&V sector and ensure that the knowledge and expertise that exists is fully harnessed.			
15.	Initial review of deliverability of the strategy including gaps completed by June 2025 and exploration of options for collaboration with health services in the Republic of Ireland where this is possible.	<p>The review of deliverability, including key gaps in services, is addressed at recommendation 1 above.</p> <p>Relationships have been established with colleagues in the Republic of Ireland with a view to exploring specific areas for closer collaboration going forward</p>	Gaps identified by June 2025 and full delivery of the RMHS implementation plan by April 2029	On track to complete
16.	Audit of current challenges in relation to service provision and action plan on service improvements required. In order to improve current service provision, DoH is in the process of recruiting a fixed term (one year) post specifically to scope current service challenges and facilitate service improvement. It is anticipated that recruitment will be completed by August 2024.	DoH is in the process of interviewing for this permanent post as it was felt that a one-year fixed term would not be sufficient. There have been some delays to the recruitment in terms of establishing an appropriate panel but the interviews are now scheduled and will be completed by 19 <sup>th</sup> December 2024.	Sept 25	On track to complete.