Children
in Northern
Ireland

2021-2031 **Mental Health Strategy**

Department of
Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Männystrie O Poustie
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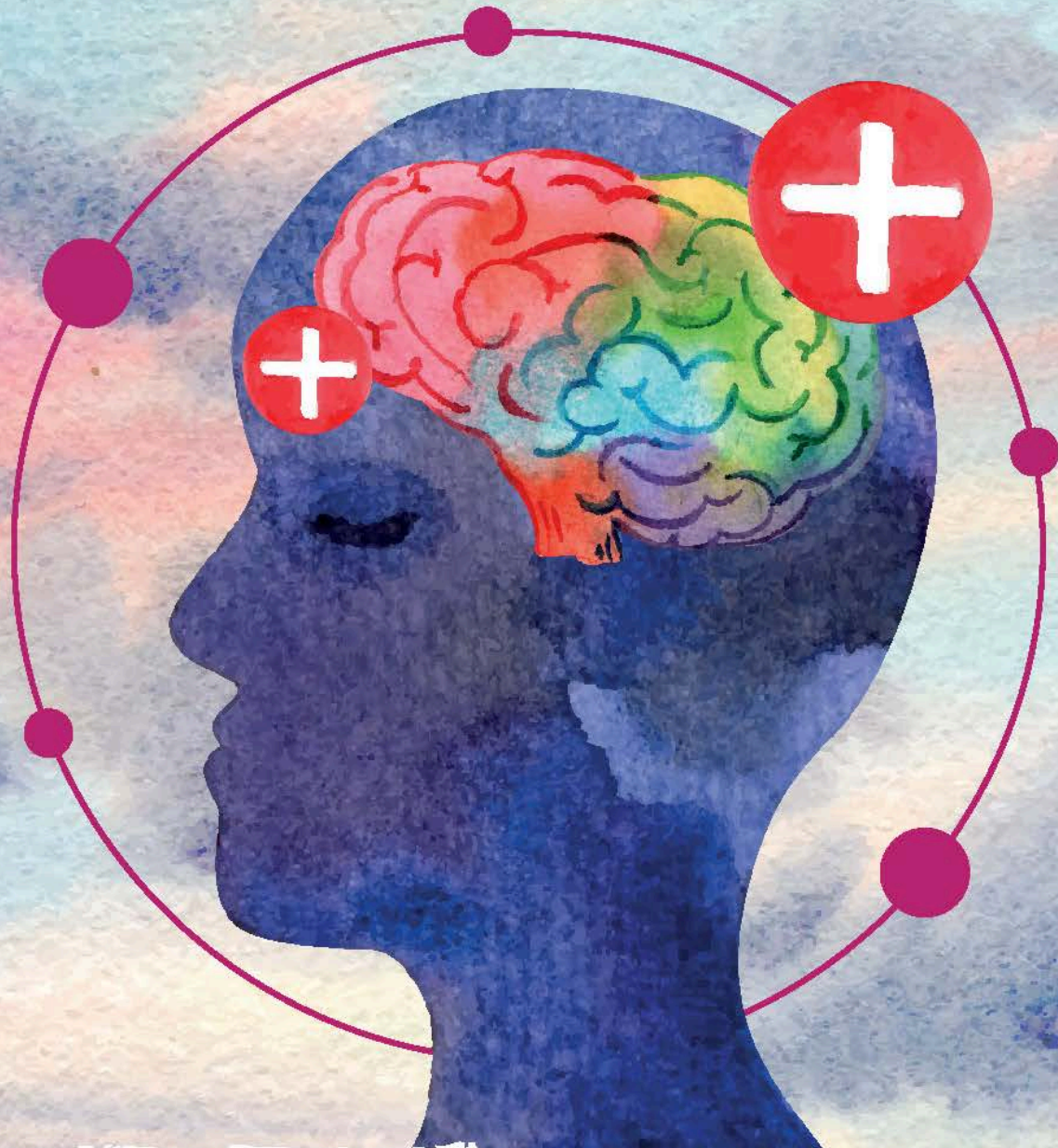
Our ideas for a ten-year plan for

MENTAL HEALTH

in Northern Ireland

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Having good mental health means you are generally happy, you don't worry too much and you can cope with the ups and downs of life.

Sometimes people's mental health isn't so good - they can develop mental health problems.

Maybe they become sad or worried all the time or they get angry easily or have mood swings or give up hope or see and hear things that aren't real.

If someone has a mental illness it can change the way they think, feel or act.

WHY DO WE NEED A PLAN?

The Department of Health here is in charge of making sure we all have healthy bodies and good mental health. We know that too many people here have mental health problems and can find it difficult to get the help they need.

The Department wanted to find out about mental health in Northern Ireland, so we talked to people who have mental health problems and to the people who care for them. We talked to professionals and to people who run mental health services, as well as to people who study and research mental health.

Some facts...

- The number of people here who have mental health problems is 25% higher than in England
- People who are poorer are more likely to develop mental health problems
- 39% of people here said they had suffered a distressful, upsetting event (trauma) during the Troubles
- One in every ten young people experiences problems with their feelings
- One in every six young people has an eating disorder
- One in every ten young people deliberately harm themselves
- Young people here are 25% more likely to feel sad or extremely worried than those in England

While mental health services have improved in recent years, the Department knows that more needs to be done. So, we have been working on a plan to make things better and now we want to know what YOU think of it.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

Everyone, at any age, is helped to have positive mental health

People aren't looked down on because of mental illness

People have access to the right help, at the right time, in the right place

People are helped to get better if they do become ill

Mental health services are caring and can treat the effects of trauma

Mental health services are built on real evidence about what works
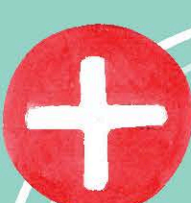
Mental health services are about improving lives and helping people to be the best they can be

People's differences, their right to be treated equally, and their other human rights are respected

People have a choice of services, no matter where they live

People and their needs are at the centre of mental health services

THREE MAIN THINGS WE ARE SETTING OUT TO DO

1 Helping people to feel good and be strong – by acting early and doing things that prevent poor mental health from starting

2 Providing the right support at the right time

3 New ways of working

Helping people to feel good and be strong – by acting early and doing things that prevent poor mental health from starting

- Make a detailed plan based on acting early and preventing mental ill health – this will also look at the needs of groups we know are most affected.

- Make sure people across Northern Ireland have better access to counselling (talking therapies).

- Make sure children learn about positive mental health early on, and that we support families to make sure that children get the best start in life.

- Improve mental health services for children and young people with all types of disabilities – including support for their families.

Providing the right support at the right time

- Put more money into mental health services for children and young people (CAMHS).

- Pay attention to children and young people who are particularly at risk.

- Create emergency mental health services for children and young people who are having a crisis.

- Develop services that are about the person getting better.

- Make sure community services and voluntary services are a full part of the mental health system.

- Use digital technology to help people with their mental health.

- Make sure that we also check and support people's physical health when they are being treated for mental health problems.

- Make sure we have enough hospital beds and that people who need them get the best possible care.

- Have a Northern Ireland wide service for people who are in crisis and at risk of suicide.

- Have joined up help for those who have mental health issues as well as drugs/alcohol problems.

- Have special services to help pregnant women and new mums who have mental health problems, for people who have very serious problems, and for those who have eating disorders.

New ways of working

- Develop a mental health service that will work across the whole of Northern Ireland.

- Look at what training mental health workers need.

- Look at ways that service users can support and speak up for each other.

- Put money into a special centre for mental health research.

Tell us what you think ...

Are we doing the right things?

Is there something else you think we should be doing?

Of all the things we are going to do – which are the most important?