



Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Pre-Budget Submission 2023

August 2022



The IACP is seeking the following from Budget 2023



School Counselling and Psychotherapy Initiative

Give our children and young people access to the help they need, when they need it.



Tax Relief

Fully extend tax relief to include counselling and psychotherapy, as a qualifying health expense. This will make it more affordable to people who need these supports.



VAT Exemption

Seeking equity of treatment and parity of esteem as mental health professionals delivering psychotherapy and counselling, with our peers who deliver physical health care.





The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP)

The IACP was established in 1981 to identify, develop and maintain professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy. Our work promotes best practice and the development of the profession.

The IACP represents more than 5,000 members based in communities all over the country and is the largest Counselling and Psychotherapy Association in Ireland.

The IACP is calling on the Government to increase investment in counselling and psychotherapy with the ultimate aim of establishing universal access to counselling and psychotherapy for all in need. To support the achievement of this goal the IACP has identified 3 initial steps that must be prioritised in the 2023 budget:

1. School Counselling and Psychotherapy Initiative

The IACP is seeking a commitment from Government to provide access to counselling and psychotherapy services through primary and secondary schools.

There is an urgent need for services to address the mental health issues facing children and young people across Ireland. This initiative is a critical step towards giving our children and young people access to the help they need, when they need it.

Following the impact of Covid-19 and related restrictions, concerns over children's mental health have increased. A nationally representative general public survey, commissioned by the IACP and conducted by Behaviour & Attitudes (B&A) earlier this year clearly demonstrates the support of the public for this essential service. It found that 94% of people think that it is important for children/adolescents to have access to counselling/ psychotherapy if they are struggling with their mental health.

Cost

The IACP estimates that the cost of providing this service to both primary and second level pupils will be approximately €28 million per annum (€11.5 m for primary and €16.5 m for second level).

2. Tax Relief

Tax relief to be fully extended to include counselling and psychotherapy, as a qualifying health expense, in Budget 2023. We are calling for these measures to increase access to counselling and psychotherapy supports. This change will make it more affordable to people who need these supports.

The IACP asserts that mental health services are an essential part of overall health provision and have become more so due to the impact of Covid 19. Access to psychotherapy and counselling services are essential and should be considered as equally important as access to physical health services.





3. VAT Exemption

The IACP seeks equity of treatment and parity of esteem as mental health professionals delivering psychotherapy and counselling, with our peers who deliver physical health care, such as GPs and dentists. The application of the VAT exemption would bring counsellors and psychotherapists into line with the exemption currently available to psychologists, thereby ensuring equity of treatment of mental health professionals.

Cost

It is not possible to estimate the cost to the Exchequer of the IACP's proposal for tax relief and VAT exemption due to the absence or unavailability of good data on which to base assumptions. However, the cost of investing in counselling and psychotherapy can be offset against their demonstrable effect on keeping people healthy. The across-the-board socioeconomic benefits of investing in counselling and psychotherapy services is an investment in our future, helping our nation recover and move on from the effects of Covid-19, and an investment in the overall health and wellbeing of all people.

Likewise, the extension of tax relief eligibility and applying for the exemption from VAT would be largely self-financing due to its positive impact on mental health by making services more affordable and accessible.

Conclusion

Budget 2023 is a timely opportunity for the Government to respond to mental health needs, exacerbated and amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's modest and fair proposals would ensure equal treatment in terms of tax relief for mental health supports and VAT measures for mental health professionals.

In addition, and in order to address the growing need for counselling and psychotherapy services for children and young people, it is proposed that funding be provided to establish access to counselling and psychotherapy through schools.

The immediate benefit of adopting IACP's modest proposals in 2023 would be to make much needed and sought-after psychotherapy and counselling services more affordable and accessible to the many people in need and on waiting lists in every community in Ireland.

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