

## Health

Table 2.1: Waiting Lists for Treatment: Adults and Children, 2014-2023

	Dec 2014	Nov 2016	Nov 2018	Nov 2020	Nov 2021	Nov 2022	Nov 2023
<b>Outpatients</b>							
Total waiting	385,781	440,629	515,360	612,576	636,695	602,832	580,055
Waiting 18+ months	20,474	29,478	88,361	156,955	165,266	106,051	62,164
<b>Inpatient/Day Case Active Waiting List*</b>							
Total waiting	63,105	81,103	70,989	72,843	75,740	80,232	84,287
Waiting 18+ months	566	4,001	5,413	8,629	11,686	8,207	6,906

**Other Lists:**

\*People waiting for an appointment date for their treatment are categorised as 'Active'.

Numbers on other lists (Nov, 2023, adults and children) include:

Inpatient/Day Case – Active GI Endoscopy: 23,279.

Inpatient/Day Case - 'To come in': 30,892.

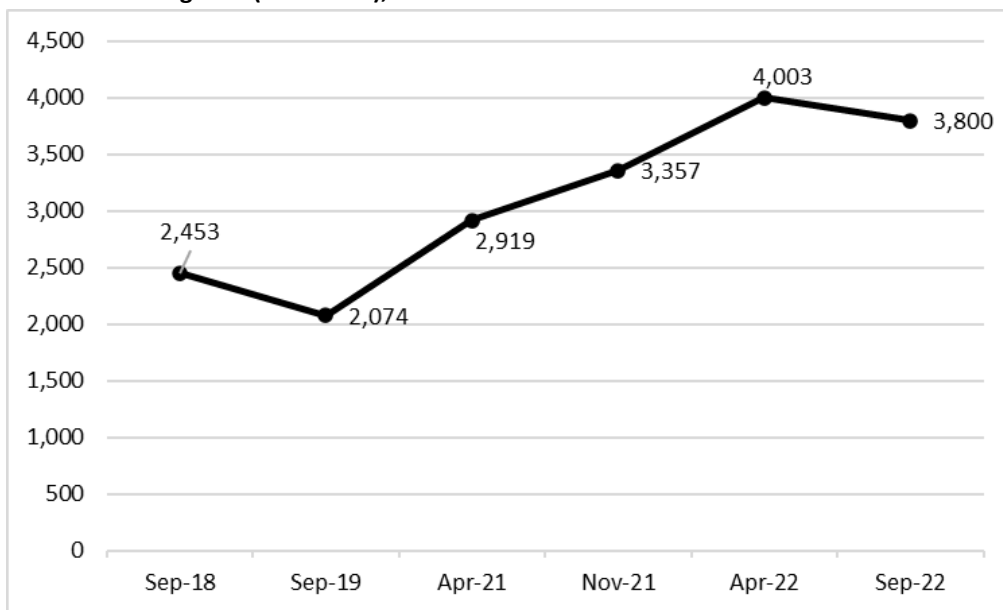
Inpatient/Day Case Planned procedures: 18,463.

Inpatient/Day Case GI Endoscopy Planned Procedure: 80,204.

Suspensions (temporarily unavailable or clinically unsuitable for their procedure - Inpatient/Day Case/Outpatients): 58,985

Source: National Treatment Purchase Fund website.

Chart 2.1: Number on Waiting Lists (all 9 CHOs), CAMHS 2018-2022



Source: Mental Health Commission (2023): Independent Review of the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the State by the Inspector of Mental Health Services, p.16.

## Health

### *Waiting Times*

Ireland is the only EU country without universal primary care coverage, which leads to an overuse of more expensive hospital care. Strong inequalities in access persist.<sup>1</sup> An ESRI study found that there may be a bed capacity deficit of approximately 1,000 inpatient beds in public acute hospitals in 2023. Over 300 additional inpatient beds are required per annum to keep up with the ageing of the population.<sup>2</sup> Official statistics suggest that over 580,000 people were waiting for an outpatient appointment in November 2023 while over 84,200 people were waiting for treatment as an in-patient/day case, and 23,279 people were on an inpatient/ day case GI Endoscopy list.<sup>3</sup> Among people waiting for an outpatient appointment, those waiting 18+ months numbered over 62,100 people while some 6,900 people were waiting 18+ months for an inpatient/day case appointment. The pandemic is likely to have contributed to the numbers on the waiting lists in recent years. However, as Table 2.1. shows, there have been high numbers on waiting lists over many years.

### *Mental Health*

The area of mental health is one requiring urgent attention. The Inspector of Mental Health Services suggests that Ireland has chronically underfunded mental health services and an inclination to drift towards providing institutional care for vulnerable groups.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the Inspector outlines that funding allocated to mental health has been between 5–6 per cent of Ireland’s total health budget in recent years, which is a long way off from

reaching the 10 per cent of health funding proposed for mental health proposed by Sláintecare.

Amongst the issues faced by people trying to access mental health services are waiting lists, with over 17,500 people (children and adults) waiting for treatment from a psychologist in March 2023, and over 6,300 waiting for over a year.<sup>5</sup> Chart 2.1 shows the numbers waiting for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The Mental Health Commission notes that this issue requires a targeted national capital plan. Another issue is continued lack of development of community mental health rehabilitation services, with many areas of the country having no access to rehabilitation services (rehabilitation meaning an approach that maximizes quality of life and social inclusion).<sup>6</sup>

### **Policy Priorities**

- Institute long-term planning and investment in the sector, acknowledging the impending demographic changes in Ireland, to ensure that we can cope with these changes.
- Increase funding for CAMHS.
- Increase the availability and quality of Primary Care and Social Care services.
- Ensure medical card-coverage for all people who are vulnerable.
- Create a statutory entitlement to home care.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.oecd.org/ireland/ireland-country-health-profile-2021-4f7fb3b8-en.htm>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RN20230101.pdf>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.ntpf.ie/home/nwld.htm>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.mhcirl.ie/sites/default/files/2023-06/MHC%202022%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/performance-reports/performance-profile-january-to-march-2023.pdf>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.mhcirl.ie/sites/default/files/2023-07/Mental%20Health%20Commission%20Independent%20Reviews%20of%20CAMHS%20services%20in%20the%20State.pdf>