**High Level Task Force to consider the mental health and addiction challenges of persons interacting with the criminal justice system (HLTF)**

**Memorandum for Government - Briefing - 20th September 2022**

* Memorandum for the Government will be brought to Cabinet on the 20/09 for approval of the HLTF report and implementation plan.
* It is recognised internationally that vulnerable people with mental health and addiction challenges are over-represented in our criminal justice systems.
* *Sharing the Vision*, our national mental health policy, aims to divert as many people as possible with mental health difficulties away from the criminal justice system and provided with appropriate health and social care supports.
* The two reports of the Interdepartmental Group to examine issues relating to people with mental illness who come in contact with the Criminal Justice System (dating from 2012 and 2018) contain recommendations on addressing the issues around this complex challenge.
* The Programme for Government: Our Shared Future committed to the establishment of the taskforce. The HLTF was established in April 2021 under the independent chairmanship of Kathleen Lynch, former Minister of State for Primary Care, Mental Health, and Disability.
* The HLTF was made up of representatives from D/Health, D/Justice, the HSE, the Irish Prison Service (IPS), the Probation Service, An Garda Síochána, the judiciary, the D/CEDIY and D/Housing.
* The HLTF consulted with relevant stakeholders, as required, such as the Chair of NIMC, the Mental Health Commission, the Inspector of Prisons, Prison Visiting Committees, the Irish Penal Reform Trust and academia.
* Three subgroups were set up as part of the HLTF. Subgroup 1 focused on diversion, subgroup 2 on the capacity of IPS and the central mental hospital, and subgroup 3 on community issues and through-care from custody.
* Subgroup 1 recommendations include the development of a Community Access Support Team (CAST) and strengthening the existing Adult Caution Scheme.
* Subgroup 2 recommendations include a single system of governance for forensic mental health services across the prison estate and the prioritisation of further Intensive Care Rehabilitation Units (ICRUs).
* Subgroup 3 recommendations include expansion of the existing Prison In-reach and Court Liaison Service (PICLS) and the extension of the HSE Single Integrated Case Management model and its alignment with case management models in place in both the Probation Service and IPS.
* In total there are 67 recommendations. The implementation plan ownership for each of the recommendations and expected delivery time frames. They are divided into short-term (within 18 months), medium-term (within 3 years), long-term (within 5 years).
* Progress on the implementation of the recommendations will be subject to monitoring on a quarterly basis by a joint Department Steering Committee. A consolidated progress report compiled by the Steering Committee will then be presented to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Justice every 6 months.
* The HLTF terms of reference did not extend to examination of the cost/resourcing implications accordingly, the HLTF did not quantify costs in the report.
* While additional investment will be required to address the challenges highlighted by the HLTF, the report has a strong focus on enhancing existing resources, collaboration and information sharing across Departments and agencies.
* It is expected that some recommendations can be delivered this year from within existing resources, others will have to be factored into budgetary planning for 2023 onwards.
* The implementation of the recommendations will need to be considered in the context of competing demands for annual budgets and HSE Service Plans, as well as on-going staff recruitment challenges in both health and justice sectors.
* As a number of the recommendations align with the objectives of the *Sharing the Vision*, budgetary provision will be made through that funding stream.