

Potential for Digital Technology to Transform Youth Mental Health in Ireland

- National Centre for Youth Mental Health appearing before Oireachtas Committee
- Plans revealed for 'eJigsaw', a digital portal to support the mental health needs of young people, in partnership with MSD Ireland.

2nd May 2018 – Digital technology has the potential to transform the design and delivery of youth mental health supports and services in Ireland according to Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health. The comments were made by Dr Joseph Duffy, CEO, Jigsaw, who today participated in a hearing by the Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Healthcare regarding the prevention and promotion in mental health

Jigsaw also announced details of 'eJigsaw', an e-mental health initiative for young people and those around them to be launched by the end of 2018. Phase one of 'eJigsaw', which is supported by MSD Ireland, will see the delivery of a high quality, accessible, e-mental health platform which will focus on both prevention and early intervention aimed at young people, parents and adults working and volunteering with young people.

Addressing the Committee hearing regarding the challenges of youth mental health provision, Dr Duffy said "We strongly believe that Ireland has the potential to be a global leader in youth mental health research and support services by 2028. However fully embracing the potential of digital technology will be critical. We see the potential for digital technology to transform the way young people in Ireland look after their mental health and to transform the way we as a country design and deliver mental health supports and services."

Dr Duffy outlined a number of sustainable solutions to better support youth mental health in Ireland including a greater focus on early intervention and prevention, greater collaboration across the sector, additional investment in research, as well as a dedicated focus on the potential of digital technology.

Liz O'Donnell, Director of Policy Government Affairs and Communications at MSD Ireland said "We were delighted when Jigsaw were selected as the successful 2018 recipient of MSD's Neighbour of Choice programme which sees a grant of up to \$100,000 (approx. €82,000) given to a chosen cause or project. Through our network of over 1,700 staff nationwide, we know that the area of youth mental health services and supports is one that requires further investment and resourcing and we are very proud to have an opportunity to collaborate with Jigsaw on this worthwhile venture. Through our own online patient support programmes we have seen the value of online assistance and are therefore fully aware of the potential impact of digital on the healthcare landscape."

Speaking about the launch of eJigsaw, Joseph Duffy, CEO, Jigsaw said "At Jigsaw, we want to see an Ireland where every young person's mental health is valued and supported. The key features of our vision include a focus on prevention as well as early intervention, accessibility and responsiveness and a commitment to meaningful youth participation and community involvement. We need to identify innovative solutions that meet the needs of both young people and parents in terms of providing access to preventative resources as well as early intervention supports. It is our hope that solutions such as 'eJigsaw' will provide a template for further initiatives in this area and we welcome the support of MSD Ireland for this activity."

ENDS

Notes for editors:

About Jigsaw

Jigsaw is the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, committed to bringing about an Ireland where every young person's mental health is valued and supported.

Established (as Headstrong) in 2006, Jigsaw is a primary care mental health service offering free, accessible, timely, impactful and evidence-driven mental health supports for young people aged 12-25 through a nationwide network of 13 regional hubs, through which we support young people with emerging mild to moderate mental health issues to develop the coping skills and resilience that help them to deal with present and future challenges to their mental health.

The key features of 'the Jigsaw model' include a focus on prevention as well as early intervention, accessibility and responsiveness and a commitment to meaningful youth participation and community involvement.

Jigsaw adopts a systemic view of mental health and, therefore, in addition to the therapeutic supports on offer to young people, Jigsaw is actively engaged in a programme of evidence-informed mental health literacy and capacity building in the community. This helps to ensure that parents, other concerned adults and those who work or volunteer with young people, are better informed and more confident in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the young people in their lives.

Find out more how we support young people with their mental health at www.jigsaw.ie.

About MSD

MSD, known as Merck & Co. Inc., Kenilworth, NJ, USA in the US and Canada, has operations in more than 140 countries. MSD employs approximately 1,700 people across its sites in Ireland, which encompass manufacturing, R&D, commercial and marketing facilities in addition to global support services.

As a global leader in healthcare, we are dedicated to helping the world be well through a wide range of innovative health solutions. This includes the development, production and distribution of prescription medicines, vaccines and biologic therapies as well as animal health products. We also drive and support the on-going development of patient support initiatives.

Our core values are driven by the desire to improve life, achieve scientific excellence, operate with the highest standards of integrity, expand access to our products, and employ a diverse workforce that values collaboration. Many of the most widely used MSD medicines are developed by our teams in Ireland, with over 50% of MSD's global top 20 products now manufactured here in Ireland. We have invested hugely in the Irish market and our Irish sites are highly regarded, and renowned, by our colleagues across the globe. For more information please visit www.msd.ie