



BUDGET 2023

Pre Budget Submission to the Department of Finance



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Executive Summary

Budget 2023 is crucially important to the future of the people who are supported through addiction and homeless services. Coolmine Therapeutic Community ('Coolmine') calls for an investment of €1.5m annually and a once off Capital Investment of €2m to fund the following actions to safeguard health and homeless service delivery, save lives as well as ultimately reduce longer term exchequer funding:

1. €285K IN 2023 TO ALIGN INTO HSE Payscale AND THEREAFTER INCREASING WITH PAY INFLATION

- the biggest risk to attracting and retaining staff that are highly skilled, qualified and experienced for the incredibly challenging work we carry out is that quite simply they can find roles with better terms and conditions. To continue to deliver the excellent outcomes that we do, we must align pay and other conditions to that of equivalent grades in the HSE.
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2. €885K FOR FULL COST RECOVERY ON SERVICE DELIVERY

- We need to address the historic underfunding situation in our traditional services in the East Region (€360k) which have been subsidised by unrestricted funds over the years and resulting in the organisation not being able to maintain a 'rainy day fund'
 - Provide adequate and sustainable multi-annual funding agreements between the HSE and the organisation that reflects the full cost of service delivery and accounts for increases in inflation.
 - Ensure full recovery of costs in the recently launched Limerick residential facility which is expected to be at full capacity next year (€250k)
 - Recognises and provides for the necessary costs of back office support in an increasingly regulated environment (e.g. Compliance, Procurement, HR, quality assurance) to ensure compliance with governance/ regulatory requirements (€220k).
 - Fund increases in energy costs (€55k)
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3. €330K TO FUND COMMUNITY PARENTS UNDER PRESSURE (PUP) THERAPISTS TO SUPPORT OVER 250 HIGH RISK FAMILIES IMPACTED BY ADDICTION IN IRISH SOCIETY NATIONALLY.

To fund the provision of 6 PuP therapists and a Team Leader which research shows can make a real difference in breaking the cycle of addiction

4. €2M INVESTMENT IN CONVERTING DORMITORY STYLE ACCOMMODATION IN COOLMINE LODGE (MEN'S RESIDENTIAL FACILITY) TO SINGLE OCCUPANCY ROOMS

Following the COVID pandemic and in line with current best practice, dormitory accommodation is no longer considered by Coolmine TC to be fit for purpose. Coolmine TC desire to convert to Single Room Occupancy while continuing to provide the same level of service to current and future clients.

Background



Coolmine is a national drug and alcohol treatment service providing a range of quality residential and day services to people coming from long term social deprivation with problematic substance use and their families, since 1973. Coolmine is substantially funded through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) contract with the HSE under Section 39 of the Health Act 2004 (see appendix for full breakdown of funders). In 2021, a total of 1,885 individuals accessed support across a range of services including residential, outreach, pre-entry, step-down, medical, career guidance, housing, family support and aftercare programmes.

Coolmine's Vision is clear. Coolmine's Board members, management and staff are committed to a vision of recovery where everyone has the opportunity to overcome addiction and live a fulfilled and productive life. In practical terms this means not only creating pathways to high quality treatment but also in developing recovery capital for our clients and their families which enable effective reintegration into their community. Our services are targeted at improvements in physical and psychological health and well-being, re-engagement with family, developing positive peer relationships, supporting access to housing, gaining employment and accessing education, training and development. We are focused on delivering quality outcomes which address the whole life needs of the individual.

In 2021 service delivery grew in collaboration with the HSE, as we established community-based facilities in the Mid West and South West. At year end 2021 we have 13 facilities operational nationally.

Demand for Services

Over the last 12 months there has been an 11% increase in treated problem drug cases in Ireland[i]. Opioids (mainly heroin) was the most common main problem drug reported in 2021 indicating that levels of social deprivation persist in Irish society. Cocaine was the second most common drug reported in 2021 (30.2%) indicating the increasing prevalence of cocaine as a problem drug in Irish society.

In April 2022, there has been a 24% increase in the total number of people accessing emergency accommodation in Dublin[ii]. The number of single adults who entered homelessness was 4 times the number of people exiting, while 3 times more families entered homelessness than exited. The cost of living is increasing resulting in more and more families experiencing social deprivation[iii].

We can predict a significant increase in problem drug and alcohol use and homelessness. Investment in drug treatment services, that respond to existing and emerging drug and alcohol trends, will decrease the prevalence of problem drug use and cycles of social deprivation in Ireland.

Treatment and rehabilitation in the therapeutic community model works. An American study Drug Abuse Treatment Outcomes Survey (DATOS, 1998) reported that one third of clients remained drug free 3 years following treatment.

In 2016, Trinity College Dublin and Coolmine published outcomes research which found that 72% of Coolmine clients were illicit drug free two years after treatment intake. Other key findings from this longitudinal study Pathways Through Treatment[iv]include:

- 98% of clients were not engaged in criminal activity after 24-months
- Client employment rose from 3% at intake to 25% after 24-months
- Engagement in education rose from 2% at intake to 17% after 24-months

Challenges Facing Coolmine

Coolmine has expanded significantly in the last two years nationally while continuing to provide services during the Covid pandemic. But a number of challenges have emerged that must be addressed if we are to continue to provide the service that our vulnerable service users deserve. We believe that solving these challenges will result in better outcomes for our clients and ultimately for the exchequer.

These challenges relate to:

- the terms and conditions of employment which at present result in difficulties recruiting and retaining staff. This leads to higher costs (training, recruiting), poorer quality services and ultimately sub-optimal outcomes.
- It is critically important that we are fully funded for the service that we agree with funders to provide, including the increasing governance and compliance costs. We do believe that funding should be provided in a multi-annual agreement covering our services nationally rather than the more inefficient model of regional annual agreements.
- We have costed this at €1.5m annually and we believe that the benefits that arise more than offset this cost, e.g. lower prison costs, health care costs and higher productivity in the workplace. We anticipate these costs will be financed by the HSE (€1.25m) and Probation Service (€250k)

In addition, a once-off capital investment of €2m is required to upgrade the accommodation in Coolmine Lodge (Men's residential facility) to single room occupancy. This action will assist compliance with the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) National Safer Better Healthcare (SBHC) Standards[i] to ensure a physical environment is developed and managed to promote better health and wellbeing for service users (section 2.7.4) and to minimise the risk to service users and members of the workforce from acquiring a Healthcare Associated Infection (section 2.7.5). Furthermore, assist in meeting the National Quality Standards framework for Homeless Services in Ireland (2019)[ii] that details the provision of temporary accommodation addresses the person's need for privacy: where feasible, each service user will have single room occupancy (section 3.4). Following the Covid pandemic, and in line with current best practice, the dormitory accommodation is no longer fit for purpose. We seek to comply with standards in healthcare and homeless service provision to convert Coolmine Lodge to single room occupancy while continuing to provide the same level of service to current and future clients.

Action Plan

Action 1: Align with HSE Payscale

Treatment and rehabilitation in the therapeutic community model works. That is our starting position and it is a very good one. Like most organisations, success for Coolmine is directly linked to its people. The stability of staff in place with a long-term commitment to the people they support is at the heart of Coolmine's success and has been central to building our reputation as a leading and credible service provider in this sector. As a Section 39 Service Provider, in order to attract and retain high quality staff, we must be able to demonstrate to current staff and job applicants that they are valued and paid equally for the same work regardless of the employer's designation (Section 38, Section 39 or the HSE).

Our people are the engine room that has driven the growth in Coolmine over the past 18 months and the significant expansion of services to people struggling with addiction. We are determined that our people will continue to be one of our signature strengths. Conscious of the many challenges associated with a period of rapid growth we have been proactive in conducting a 'Strategic Growth Risk Assessment' and regularly updating our 'Risk Register' to ensure that we are doing everything possible to stay ahead of the challenges and threats inherent in such a growth phase. We will continue to strive to be a leading partner to the State and its agencies in this sector but to do this we need to have a level playing field and, in this regard, - we need some assistance.

The reality is that current cost of living pressures on households and families are such that people who would never have contemplated working elsewhere now feel compelled to move - often for very small increases in basic pay. Coolmine is not asking to be paid any more than any comparator roles elsewhere in the sector - but we do need to be paid the same. We are experiencing high levels of staff turnover (27.8% in 2021) and apart altogether from the significant recruitment costs, there is a slow but steady drain of the experience that has underpinned our success to date and the quality of services delivered. The threat from continued high levels of staff turnover coupled with an inability attract new and replacement staff is consistently the number one item on our risk register. Salary is the standout issue coming through at exit interviews and in recruitment campaigns. It is only natural that we are concerned about losing some of our best and brightest and the potential this has to impact on the services we deliver.

We are asking that the terms and conditions for our staff are the same as equivalent grades in the HSE. There are many benefits from this approach.

Pay Parity - the Benefits

1. A major boost in dealing with our biggest risk exposure - staff turnover / retention.
2. Stops the drain of some of our best people to other organisations in the sector - very often to do the same job for more money elsewhere
3. Reinforces and strengthens our organisational culture (one culture)
4. Allows us to invest with confidence in long term relationships with key staff through the roll out of integrated career pathways and development programmes
5. It would contribute hugely to the staff stability that underpins professional relationships at all levels and the long-term commitment to the people they support which is fundamental to our service model.
6. Allow staff to have a realistic expectation of career progression with Coolmine without feeling they have to compromise in relation to their benefits package.

We request €110k p.a be provided to align the paycales in Coolmine with those in the HSE. In addition, we also request the employers pension contribution costs for those staff who are members of our pension scheme should be funded at a current cost of €90k. This will increase in 2024 with the introduction of auto-enrolment pension rules being introduced and will review that next year. Finally, training and development costs of €85k in addition to existing requirements are estimated due to an increasingly complex regulatory environment. The total estimated cost for 2023 is €285k.

Action 2: Full Cost Recovery on Service Delivery

There are a number of strands to this request.

(i) Historic Underfunding. The 2021 Annual Report for Coolmine highlights the underfunding that has arisen in the East Region. The transfer from what are known as unrestricted funds (funds raised by the organisation which the Directors are free to use at their discretion) totalled €327k in the year. This is simply not sustainable. An organisation cannot depend on unrestricted funds to finance ongoing service requirements. This could result in the provision of uneven services as services reduce and expand depending on what funds are raised independently to cover shortfalls. In addition, no management charge on our services in the East region is provided which results in no 'rainy day fund' for the organisation for when problems arise as they inevitably do from time to time (cooker needs replacing, projects arise which may need expert advice). We would ask that this underfunding, together with a management charge of 10% on this cost, be funded by the HSE (total cost €360k).

(ii) Multi-Annual Service Level Agreement. At present, a Service Agreement is agreed with each CHO in the HSE individually for a period of one year. We currently have a relationship with four CHOs. The most efficient manner to deal with funding, both for the HSE and the Section 39, is to have multi-annual Service Agreements (possibly 3 years duration) and one for the entire organisation. Reporting should be simplified to reflect this. This will undoubtedly allow Coolmine to plan with a bit more certainty and reduce administrative costs both in the HSE and in Coolmine.

(iii) Mid West Women and Children's Residential Centre. We have recently launched a residential service for women in the Limerick area. We are working with our funders and Limerick City and County Council in relation to a number of factors including the long term premises from which the service will be provided and the full cost recovery of providing the service. We believe that an additional funding amount in the region of €250k will be required in 2023 and beyond.

(iv) Governance, Compliance and Support Costs. As the organisation expanded, additional back office costs necessary for the smooth operation of the service arise. In addition, recent Governance and Compliance requirements have arisen which we are obliged to meet (Charities Regulatory Authority Governance Code, Facilities management following expansion, GDPR, procurement regulations, Clinical lead). We have undertaken a review of support costs and estimate that in the region of 4 Full time equivalent roles are required to meet these requirements (at a cost of €220k)

(v) Energy Costs. Finally, energy costs have increased significantly over the last few months. We estimate that the costs will have increased by c €55k in a full year. While every effort has been made to reduce consumption (both from a sustainability and cost perspective), we are running residential centres and it is impossible to reduce the consumption of electricity and heating oil significantly.

The total estimated cost for 2023 is €885k.

Action 3: Investment in Parents Under Pressure.

Children who have parents experiencing homelessness and/or substance misuse issues face multiple adversities from pre-birth to adulthood. They are at increased risk of developing social, emotional, behavioral, educational and substance use problems themselves. Many live-in poverty, experience abuse and neglect, and there is high engagement with social services and child protective services. Parents themselves have also typically experienced significant childhood adversity, engagement in child protection and have current mental health problems. The Parents under Pressure evidence-based intervention addresses the broader family context of poverty, homelessness and enduring adversity within a therapeutic case management approach. PuP therapists are required to support high risk families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. This includes families as they transition from residential treatment. Many high risk family parents have experienced homelessness and suffered trauma. Everyday life can be challenging. Budgeting, cooking, participating in social situations and maintaining healthy routines and structure can pose difficulty.

The proposal is that we recruit 6 PuP therapists (2 in each of the three regions), and a Team Leader, at a total cost of €330k. The benefits of this approach have been well researched.

On 13th September 2018, Trinity College Dublin published research An Evaluation of the Parents under Pressure programme (PuP) at Coolmine[i]. The key findings include that 100% of participants were substance free at programme completion. All had significant reductions in levels of depression, anxiety and stress making them emotionally available for their child(ren). All parents experienced 'transformational change' in their belief and capacity to be the best parent for their child(ren). The independent research noted that Coolmine are strategically placed to lead the development of a systematic programme to improve family functioning and child outcomes for high risk families impacted by addiction.

In 2021 a total of 105 parents with substance abuse/homelessness issues participated in the PuP programme across Coolmine services with a retention rate of 80 %. An additional 132 (62 % retention rate) families experiencing multiple adversities including substance misuse and homelessness were supported with PuP in the community in the Dublin area. This was achieved through a successful funding application with Re-think Ireland. This seed funding allowed us to recruit two PuP therapists to work with families external to Coolmine in the form of home visits, service visits and remote working. Referrals for this services included community addiction services, homeless agencies, DV refuges, Tusla, probation and self -referrals. This programme was in demand with a continuous waiting list. Unfortunately due to funding expiring, PuP in the community discontinued in March 2022. We need to extend this programme.

We are calling for investment in this evidenced based intervention (€330k) that can break generational cycles of addiction, homelessness and associated issues in Ireland. PuP community therapists would provide consistency and work in collaboration with all key stakeholders, social workers, child protection and welfare services and those involved in primary care, education and addiction recovery to maximise positive outcomes. This could assist over 250 families nationally.

Action 4 - Capital Investment to Convert Coolmine Lodge to Single Occupancy Rooms

Coolmine Lodge has a current capacity of 34 beds for clients. These are all in shared dormitories (bar one single room). Following the COVID pandemic and in line with current best practice dormitory accommodation is no longer considered by Coolmine to be fit for purpose. Coolmine are required to convert to Single Room Occupancy while continuing to provide the same level of service to current and future clients. Additionally, Coolmine would like to be able to offer a dedicated de-tox/stabilisation facility for clients undergoing medicated and non-medicated detox. They also see a need for the provision of a number of 'safety-net' beds which allow clients who have transitioned out into the wider community but who experience difficulties to have appropriate accommodation and support without having to return to the programme proper.

Coolmine commissioned Donaghy and Dimond Architects (DDA) to carry out a scoping exercise considering the above aims and the existing condition of their accommodation at Coolmine Lodge. The study has considered ways in which the current demand could be met while accommodation is maintained or increased while also accommodating Coolmine TC's supported living, aftercare and social enterprise services within its campus setting of trees and historic walls.

A preferred proposal has been selected. The number of residents provided for is 40 beds for Coolmine clients at the site. Of these, 36 would be accessible including two which would be universally accessible and designed for wheelchair users.

The estimated cost of these improvements is €2m. We expect to apply for this funding through the Capital Assistance Scheme in collaboration with Fingal County Council.

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Conclusion

We are seeking €1.5 million additional annual funding (estimated split from funders is HSE (€1.25m) and Probation Service (€0.25m)) as well as a Capital Investment of €2m through the Capital Assistance Scheme (with Fingal County Council) in Budget 2023. Thereafter we would call for funding to increase with inflationary pressures for 2024 and beyond. The investment is in funding to ensure a sustainable funding model, equal terms and conditions of employment to HSE staff, multi - annual funding model and additional PuP therapists in each of the regions.

The proposed additional investment will deliver major savings to the Exchequer while reducing existing costs for:

- Emergency accommodation
- Prison Services
- Foster care
- Health care needs

The benefits of rehabilitation and treatment are huge. There is less criminality, less illicit drug use, less health problems, less relationship breakdown, less unemployment, less homelessness. Recovery from addiction is good for individual, family, community, Ireland.

This 'unlabelled' expenditure as identified in the Spending Review of 2021 on this issue[i]. It is clear to us that investing in our services will ultimately payback to society through reduction in 'unlabelled' expenditure and impacts.

Further information and publications are available at www.coolmine.ie

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Appendix

Context - Current Income and Sources of Income

Incoming Resources - Where we received our income

Income for 2021 was €5,883,463 compared to €3,953,729 in 2020, a 49% increase.

The work of Coolmine would not be possible without the continuing support of funders.

Principal funders include

- Health Service Executive/Department of Health (73%),
- Department of Justice & Equality via the Probation Service (10%)
- Department of Social Protection - CE Scheme (4%) and
- Dublin City Council (<1%)

In addition, Coolmine's income is supported by resident contributions (normally the redirection of welfare benefit to Coolmine whilst they are in our residential services) (7%), other restricted grant income and capital grant amortisation (3%) and other unrestricted income, community fundraising and donations (3%).

Coolmine is hugely appreciative of the ongoing funding, advice and support it receives from the HSE and the Probation Service and their representatives. The relationships forged with the funders are really important and Coolmine want to acknowledge and thank the various stakeholders for this support.

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