

THE SUNDAY TIMES

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Patrick Kielty unwraps the Toy Show



Home

Waits for child mental health care ‘inhumane’

Families and experts flag up ‘time bomb’ in HSE service

Julianne Corr

The country’s mental health services for children have been branded “inhumane”, with record numbers of families seeking urgent care for their children.

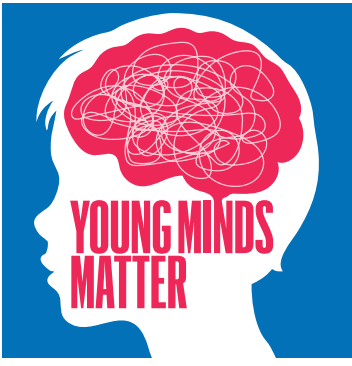
Niall Muldoon, the children’s ombudsman, said a serious overhaul of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs) was urgently needed to avoid a “time bomb waiting to happen” for thousands of vulnerable children.

Speaking to The Sunday Times as part of our Young Minds Matter campaign, Muldoon called on the government to roll out therapeutic services for children in every primary and secondary school to make early intervention available for those in crisis.

“We need to ensure early access to primary care so a child’s mental health issue is dealt with quickly and at the earliest stage, thereby preventing it from developing into something worse and perhaps more difficult to resolve,” he said.

“It was recently reported that there were children waiting times of up to 13 years for primary care in some areas, and that is simply inhumane,” he added.

New figures show there has been almost a 50 per cent increase in children referred to Camhs in recent years. Between 2020 and 2024, referrals grew from 17,436 to 25,721, an increase of 48 per cent. Up until September this year, Camhs accepted 12,102 referrals of these children; roughly a third, totalling 4,047, were still waiting to be seen.



YOUNG MINDS MATTER

PARENTS RAIL AT ‘COMPLETELY BROKEN’ SYSTEM, PAGE 6

The number of children waiting for more than a year for an appointment stands at 531.

The Sunday Times’s Young Minds Matter Campaign calls for the recruitment of at least 400 additional multidisciplinary staff; elimination of excessive waiting times; improved digital infrastructure for better communication and efficiency; a single point of access to help; and regulation of Camhs by the Mental Health Commission.

Mary Butler, the minister for mental health, said she had “made it clear to the HSE that excessive wait times need to be eliminated”.

“I am working every day with my department and the HSE to drive reforms that will make a meaningful difference for the young people and their families who need and deserve support,” she added.

Parents of children with severe needs have spoken of how they feel “exhausted and dismissed” by a system they say is failing their children.

Tracey Mullen has waited two and a half years for her nine-year-old son Tommy to be assessed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). “The system is not fit for purpose,” Mullen said.

Andrea, who requested anonymity, said that her 15-year-old autistic daughter had been mostly housebound with severe agoraphobia since June. She described her experience with Camhs as “incredibly stressful”.

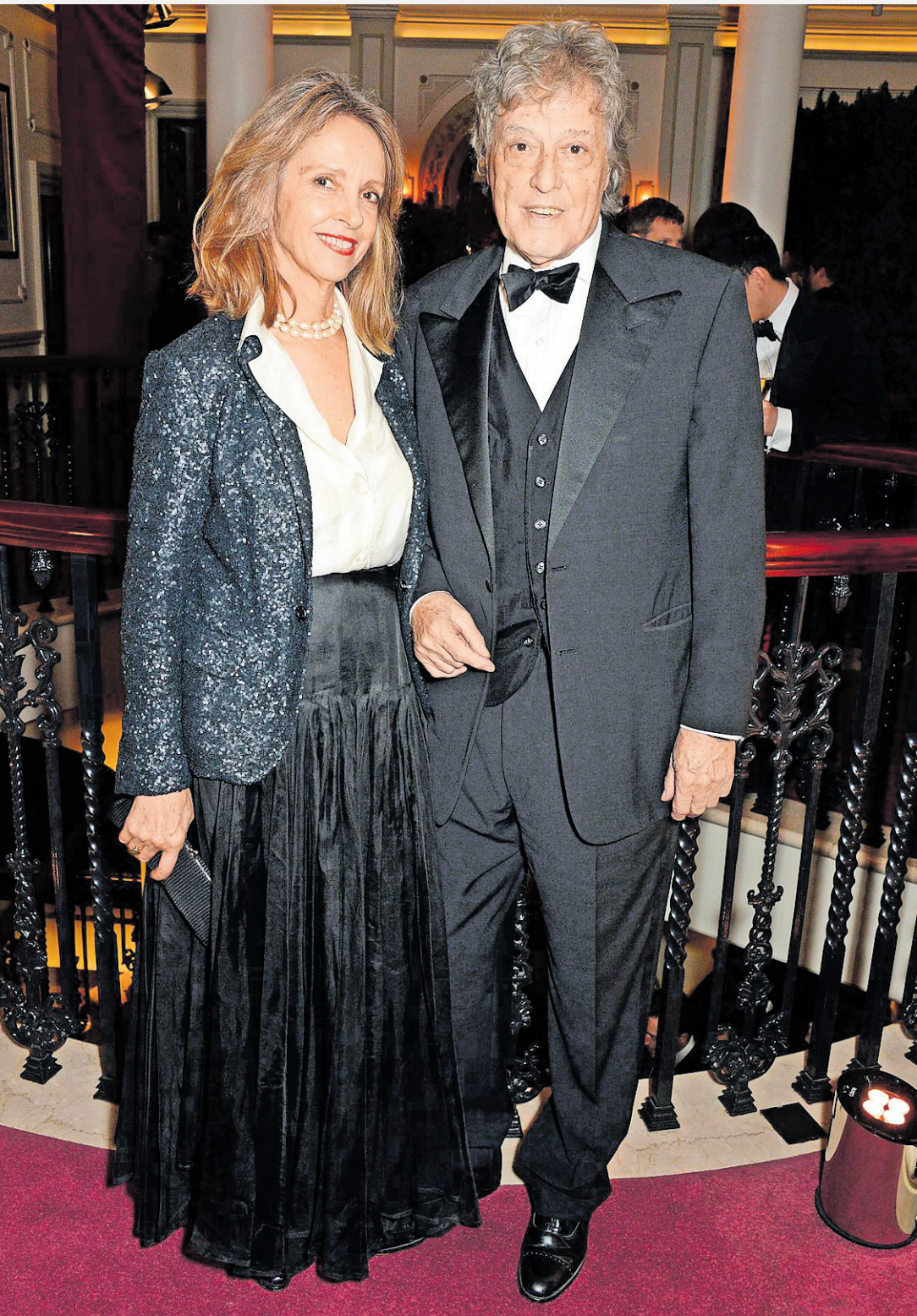
A 46-year-old woman from north Co Dublin, who also asked to remain anonymous, said she was told her 11-year-old daughter’s case was “not severe” enough for Camhs despite being suicidal, self-harming and unable to attend school.

GPs refer children to primary care psychology or Camhs depending on the severity of their condition. Camhs treats moderate to severe conditions, or cases when primary care interventions have been exhausted. Families say the pathway is so fragmented that children are bounced between services for years without treatment.

In primary care, which supports mild to moderate cases, HSE figures show that 28,168 children aged five to 17 had referrals accepted by the end of September, which is in addition to the more than 12,000 referred to Camhs this year.

More than 15,000 have been waiting over a year for an appointment with a primary care psychologist, with longer delays in some areas. In northwest Dublin, children reportedly faced waits of up to 13 years to see a primary care psychologist.

TOM STOPPARD 1937-2025



Tom Stoppard, 88, the playwright and screenwriter behind Shakespeare in Love and husband of the heiress Sabrina Guinness, has died at his home in Dorset, his agent said. Full story, page 3

Ministers slam plans to rename Dublin park

Ian Begley and Claire Scott

Government ministers and residents have criticised plans to rename Herzog Park in the south Dublin suburb of Rathgar over its links to Israel.

The proposal to remove the name of Chaim Herzog, the former Israeli president, from the park will be debated by Dublin city council tomorrow in a move that has led to accusations from members of the Jewish community of antisemitism.

Helen McEntee, the foreign affairs minister, said, while it was fair to criticise Israel for its actions in Gaza, “renaming a Dublin park in this way – to remove the name of an Irish Jewish man – has nothing to do with this and has no place in our inclusive republic”.

Simon Harris, the tanaiste, said he completely opposed the renaming plan, calling it “offensive”.

The small park, which is home to Rathgar Tennis Club, was known as Orwell Quarry Park when it opened in 1985. It was renamed Herzog Park in 1995 in honour of the man who was president of Israel from 1983 to 1993. Herzog was born in Belfast and grew up in Dublin. His father was a chief rabbi of Ireland. His son, Isaac, is the current president of Israel.

Residents said they knew of the proposal by the commemorations and naming committee of the council. One man, visiting the park with his family, said: “It just seems really pointless to me. I don’t know how changing the name of a tiny park will make any difference to anyone. Surely the council has

Continued on page 2 →



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‘Completely broken’ Families despair over long wait for children’s mental health services

Parents recount overwhelming struggles seeking help from Camhs, telling of missed ADHD assessments, repeated setbacks and young people left without vital support

Julieanne Corr

Thousands of children are waiting months, and in some cases years, for an appointment with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs), with many presenting with severe conditions such as suicidal ideation, self-harm and acute agoraphobia.

Others struggle to concentrate in school while waiting for an ADHD assessment, with experts warning prolonged delays can lead to anxiety, depression and escalating behavioural challenges.

The Sunday Times has heard from parents who say they have been left exhausted and defeated by a system they believe is dismissing their concerns, at times to the point of “gaslighting”.

They want an urgent overhaul of what they describe as a fundamentally broken service. Their concerns have been echoed by the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, which said it was seeking a “major reform of the current governance and management” of Camhs.

New data from the Department of Health shows a record 12,102 children had referrals accepted to Camhs between January 1 and September 30 this year, up 12 per cent on the same period last year when there were 10,626. Of these, just 63 per cent of new or re-referred cases were seen within 12 weeks. There were 4,047 children on the Camhs waiting list nationally at the end of September this year, with more than 500 of those children waiting over a year for services.

The department said the number of children waiting more than 12 months fell by 26 per cent between April and September this year, from 721 to 531.

GPs refer children to primary care psychology or Camhs depending on the severity of their presentation. Camhs

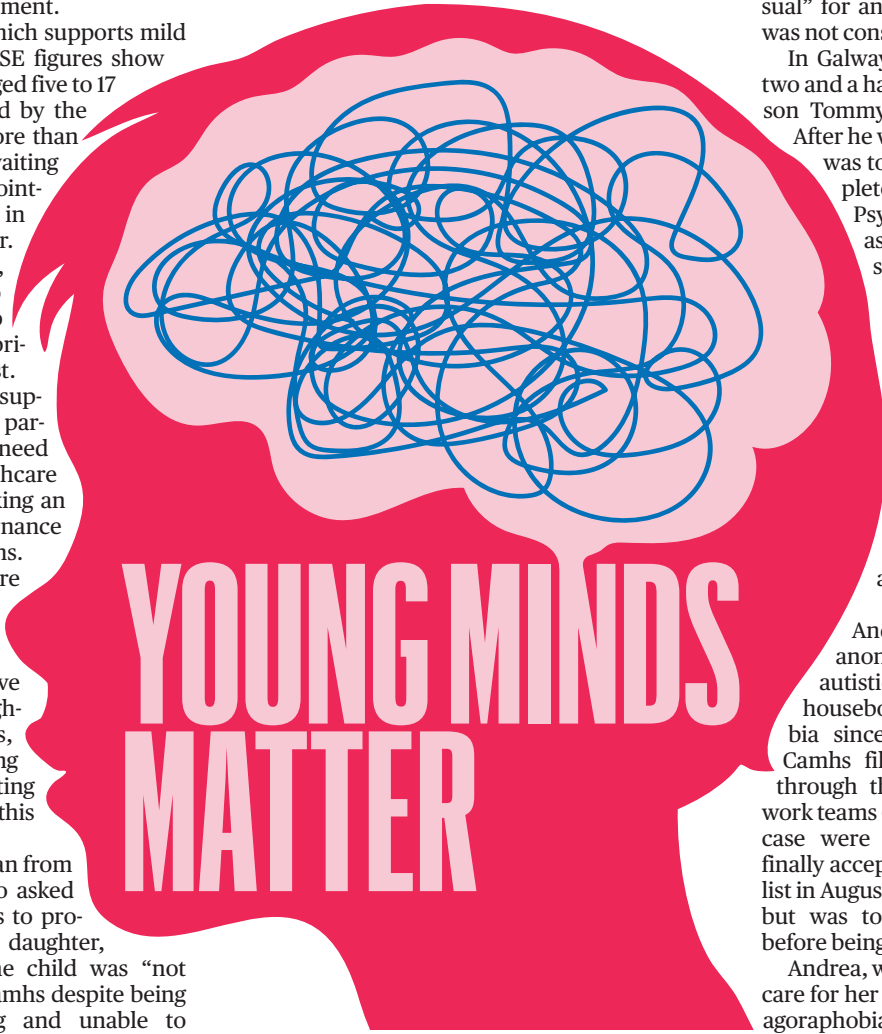
treats moderate to severe conditions, or cases when primary care interventions have been exhausted. Families say the pathway has become so fragmented that children are bounced between services for years without treatment.

In primary care, which supports mild to moderate cases, HSE figures show that 28,168 children aged five to 17 had referrals accepted by the end of September. More than 15,000 have been waiting over a year for an appointment, with delays in some areas far longer. In northwest Dublin, children are said to have faced waits of up to 13 years to see a primary care psychologist.

The Sunday Times supports the demands of parents whose children need urgent mental healthcare and psychiatrists seeking an overhaul of the governance and operation of Camhs.

Parents who are members of Families for Reform of Camhs, a group of more than 1,200 people who have come together to highlight their experiences, have shared harrowing accounts of navigating the system with this newspaper.

A 46-year-old woman from north Co Dublin, who asked to remain anonymous to protect her 11-year-old daughter, said she was told the child was “not severe” enough for Camhs despite being suicidal, self-harming and unable to



attend school. Her daughter, who is autistic, was diagnosed at the age of three but her anxiety escalated sharply at nine. She is now attending Pieta, the suicide and self-harm prevention charity, for a second round of crisis intervention therapy.

Her mother is also paying for her to attend a private school that better accommodates her needs. “When they finally accepted her referral in April, I was told that because of the suicidal thoughts and ideation that she’d be classed as an emergency,” the mother said.

“I got called for ‘the emergency appointment’ in October – six months later. I then got a phone call on the morning of the appointment to say that it was cancelled and it was then another three weeks before they brought us in on October 20.”

Earlier this month she received a call informing her that Camhs would still not accept her child. “If a child actively self-harming and having suicidal ideation is very distressed and highly anxious, and as a result is unable to attend school, is not [at least] moderate, then what is? She’s an 11-year-old child contemplating killing herself. How is that not severe?”

She said she was told her daughter’s anxiety “wouldn’t be considered unusual” for an autistic child and therefore was not considered relevant to Camhs.

In Galway, Tracey Mullen has waited two and a half years for her nine-year-old son Tommy to be assessed for ADHD. After he was referred in May 2023, she was told his school must first complete a National Educational Psychological Service (Neps) assessment, which can take several weeks to prepare.

When the form was finalised months later, Tommy had been removed from the waiting list because the Neps paperwork was not received within two weeks of the initial referral. The system was “not fit for purpose”, Mullen said. “There’s no support at all, apart from the school he attends.”

In the west of Ireland, Andrea, who also requested anonymity, said her 15-year-old autistic daughter had been mostly housebound with severe agoraphobia since June. Despite a previous Camhs file and an ADHD diagnosis through the children’s disability network teams (CDNT), efforts to reopen her case were initially rejected. She was finally accepted on to the Camhs waiting list in August after a GP referral in March, but was told she faced another year before being seen.

Andrea, who has given up her career to care for her daughter, said: “In 2023, her agoraphobia became very, very serious;

“You never know if they are going to deliver the care your child needs



Tracey Mullen waited over two years for her son Tommy to be assessed for ADHD

HOW CAMHS NEEDS TO CHANGE

- Recruitment of more than 400 additional staff
- Elimination of excessive waiting times
- Appropriate digital infrastructure for better communication and efficiency
- A single point of access for primary care, Camhs and disability services
- Regulation of Camhs by the Mental Health Commission

she had panic attacks when she left the house and missed months of school. Her school has been brilliant and she did manage to do her Junior Cert but sometimes she is only going in for one class.”

Andrea said Camhs has accepted her daughter for yet another ADHD assessment, despite her existing diagnosis, while refusing to treat her anxiety and agoraphobia. “Camhs often claim that it is ‘not in their remit’ to deal with autistic children but actually they have to, it’s in their operational guidelines,” she said.

Andrea described her experience with Camhs as “incredibly stressful” and said she felt repeatedly “gaslighted”. She added: “You never knew what they were going to say, and if they’re actually going to deliver the care that your child so desperately needs. You just become so tired and defeated.” She has launched a podcast, *The State of Camhs*, that highlights the stories of children in the system.

Alba Diví Carné, who lives in Co Clare, said her 11-year-old had been in the Camhs system for two years with little progress. She said: “Children’s rights are being discriminated against, and thousands of lives are being destroyed because the paediatric mental health system in Ireland is completely broken, inefficient, and not fit for purpose at all.”

Diví Carné wrote to Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, the health minister, and several TDs calling for reforms, including a digital platform for families to upload documents, receive updates and communicate with clinicians. “It is hard to fathom how in 2025, the three agencies [primary care, CDNT and Camhs] still do not use basic digital technology that would allow for seamless, accessible, dynamic and permanent communication,” she said.

Amid mounting frustration from families, the government has begun implementing some reforms.

Mary Butler, the minister for mental health, said she had made it clear to the HSE that “excessive wait times” needed to be eliminated and said the number of children waiting more than 12 months for an appointment was unacceptable.

The Fianna Fail TD said she had tasked the HSE with developing a new model of care to ensure better access to streamlined support for ADHD in Camhs, admitting she was “particularly concerned” about children awaiting assessment, diagnosis and treatment for ADHD.

Butler said she had also established a national clinical lead for Camhs and resourced a new child and youth mental health office to drive reforms. “I have increased investment in Camhs by over 30 per cent in the past three years to a total of €181 million this year. Recruitment is too slow, and I have written to the HSE to request that they prioritise the filling of vacant Camhs posts,” she said.

Editorial, page 16

Thinking Of Selling?
Tailored, Expert Advice.

Mullery O'Gara.
ESTATE AGENTS

PSL No. 0014302

22 Zion Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6.
Semi Detached. PRICE: €2,750,000



5 2 c. 269 Sq.M / 2,895 Sq.Ft BER Exempt

A most attractive bay windowed Edwardian family home built in c. 1904 with magnificent secluded gardens c. 131' long and 42' wide offering ample room to extend subject to p.p. Carefully maintained with a wonderful layout, original features inc. original mantelpieces, ceiling cornice and centre roses, picture and dado rails etc. and ample off street parking. Positioned in a cul de sac within a short walk of Rathgar Village with its wide selection of shops, restaurants, cafes. Besides schools, Bushy Park, sports facilities. Convenient to M50, City Centre & Dundrum Town Centre.

33 Brighton Square, Rathgar, Dublin 6.
Semi Detached. PRICE: €2,250,000



4 c. 278 Sq.M / 2,992 Sq.Ft BER D1 No. 1064686079

A beautifully upgraded & extended semi-detached family home with uninterrupted views of Brighton Square. Set within landscaped front & rear gardens with rear laneway access, the property offers elegant & versatile living across multiple levels. Accom. comprises 2 spacious reception rooms, a light-filled open-plan kitchen/dining area with vaulted rooflights, cinema room, utility, four bedrooms inc. ensuites, family bathroom & large attic room. Brighton Square combines exclusivity, proximity to Rathgar Village, renowned schools, parks and excellent city-centre transport links.

7 Bushy Park Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6.
Semi Detached. PRICE: €2,500,000



6 c. 377 Sq.M / 4,058 Sq.Ft BER D1 No. 118384270

One of a pair of similar style homes overlooking Zion school and church to front and with magnificent south facing garden to rear backing onto The High School grounds. Wonderful layout with original features throughout and ample room to extend subject to p.p. Comprising hall, reception hall, 3 reception rooms, kitchen, utility, w.c., 6 bedrooms & bathroom. Well set back from the road with parking, side access. Beside Bushy Park, Milltown & Castle Golf Clubs, M50 etc.

8 Whitehall Road, Terenure, Dublin 12.
Semi Detached. PRICE: €1,250,000



5 c. 205 Sq.M / 2,207 Sq.Ft BER D2 No. 2118823244

A much sought-after red-brick pre-war semi-detached family home (c. 2,206 sq.ft / 205 sq.m) boasting a stunning OP kitch/din/family room extension. Beautifully upgraded & full of natural light, this spacious 5 bedroom home (1 ensuite) features elegant accommodation & a large south-facing rear garden c.90' long. Ideally located near Terenure village with excellent schools, shops, cafes and parks nearby. Convenient access to the city centre and M50.

40 Casimir Road, Harold's Cross, Dublin 6W.
Semi Detached. PRICE: €1,000,000



3 c. 148 Sq.M / 1,593 Sq.Ft BER D2 No. 118935949

A beautifully maintained red brick period home c.148 sq.m / 1,590 sq.ft. This elegant property features generous proportions, original period detail & a bright kitchen extension. Two large interconnecting reception rooms, three spacious bedrooms and a sun-filled south-west facing garden with side access combine to create an exceptionally charming home. Perfectly positioned beside Harold's Cross, Terenure, Rathgar and Rathmines, with excellent schools, parks, cafes and transport links all nearby. Within easy reach of the city centre. GFCH.

111 Leinster Road, Rathmines, Dublin 6.
Mid Terraced. PRICE: €1,250,000



3 c. 164 Sq.M / 1,766 Sq.Ft BER Exempt

A most attractive and deceptively spacious villa style home with ample parking to front and south facing garden to rear c. 51 metres long. With added benefit of magnificent modern garage c. 12.3 x 5.8m with access to Leinster Road West. Comprising of a reception hall, lounge, Bedroom 1, return bedroom 2 and bathroom. Garden level - separate entrance - kitchen/ dining, living, sunroom, bedroom 3, W.C/W.H.B. Glasshouse, study/store

188 Rathfarnham Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. Semi Detached. PRICE: €1,200,000



3 c. 172 Sq.M / 1,850 Sq.Ft BER D1 No. 106445968

A wonderful opportunity to acquire this spacious family home. Renovated over recent years with magnificent extension to rear, attic conversion & large secluded garden to rear. Parking to front & garage. Comprising hall, w.c., w.h.b., 2 inter-connecting reception rooms, L-shaped kitchen/ dining/ living, 3 bedrooms, bathroom, attic room. GFCH. Double glazed. Beside Rathfarnham Village, Bushy Park, schools etc.

6 Laurel, Hazeldeane, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
Duplex Apartment. PRICE: €1,100,000



3 c. 152 Sq.M / 1,636 Sq.Ft BER B3 No. 118835602

An impressive top-floor duplex apartment ideally positioned just off St. Stephen's Green, mins' walking distance to Ballsbridge & Donnybrook. This elegant D4 residence offers well-appointed & versatile accom, comprising hall, liv/ din, kitch, b'fast rm & bedroom 1 (currently in use as home office) & shower rm. Upstairs boasts 2 further dbl bed rms, both w/ en-suite. A south-facing balcony & uninterrupted views of Merrion Cricket Club Grounds. A prime setting near Herbert Park, the RDS & Aviva Stadium.

8 Bessborough Parade, Rathmines, Dublin 6.
Mid Terraced. PRICE: €1,050,000



3 c. 140 Sq.M / 1,507 Sq.Ft BER Exempt

A meticulously restored Regency (circa 1847) home superbly located a short walk to both Ranelagh and Rathmines Villages. Tastefully presented throughout. Accommodation: 3 reception hall, living, dining, kitchen, utility, downstairs wc, 3 bedrooms (one ensuite/bathroom) and Attic/home office. Tunde Perry Designed Landscaped Garden. Close to local schools, shops and Luas at Ranelagh & Charlemont. Pedestrian Rear access.

60 Heytesbury Street, Portobello, Dublin 8.
End of Terrace. PRICE: €875,000



3 c. 195 Sq.M / 2,099 Sq.Ft BER Exempt

A fine 3-storey period house sub-divided into 3 units and ideally suited conversion to a family home or home/income. Retaining original features with excellent proportions, full of natural light & west-facing garden to rear. Highly sought after located beside local cafes, restaurants, schools, LUAS and walking distance to St. Stephen's Green and Grafton St. c. 195 sqm/ 2,099 sq.ft.

21 Dodder Road Lower, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. End of Terrace. PRICE: €850,000



3 c. 119 Sq.M / 1,281 Sq.Ft BER F No. 116143553

A charming 1930s home on Lower Dodder Rd, overlooking the picturesque Dodder Greenway & rich in period character. Featuring high ceilings, original fireplaces & elegant proportions throughout. The light-filled accom comprises 2 interconnecting rec rooms, a bright kitchen/dining area and 3 generous bedrooms. A beautiful 50ft south-facing garden offers a tranquil retreat. Ideally located near Rathgar, Terenure & transport links, this home combines character, comfort & a superb riverside setting.

27 Orwell Hall, Marianella, Rathgar, Dublin 6. Apartment. PRICE: €725,000



2 c. 94 Sq.M / 1,012 Sq.Ft BER A3 No. 1097780429

Superb 2-bedroom ground floor apt in this exclusive dev, offering luxury, space and tranquility in a prime Rathgar location. Residents enjoy exceptional amenities inc gym, sauna, concierge, private cinema within beautifully landscaped grounds. Bright, high-spec home feats a spacious living area, Miele kitchen, 2 dbl beds (main en-suite & walk-in wardrobe) 2 private patios. A turnkey opp combining contemporary elegance in one of Dublin's most sought-after addresses.

1 Prouds Lane, Off St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2. End of Terrace. PRICE: €590,000



3 c. 114 Sq.M / 1,227 Sq.Ft BER G No. 1171002277

A rare period residence w/ superb potential, ideally positioned just off St. Stephen's Green. Offering one of Dublin's most coveted & convenient addresses, the property is moments from Grafton St, leading workplaces, cafes, parks & excellent transport links including LUAS Green Line & multiple bus routes. Set over 3 levels with a private rear yard, it offers exceptional scope for reconfiguration/ refurbishment. A prime D2 opportunity w/ outstanding lifestyle & investment appeal.

8 Rugby Villa's, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.
Mid Terraced. PRICE: €585,000



2 c. 80 Sq.M / 861 Sq.Ft BER D2 No. 118971696

A charming Butterly brick period home moments from Ranelagh, Rathmines and the Luas. Bright open-plan living/dining room with Le Droff-style fireplace, modern shaker kitchen and a sunny south-facing courtyard with rear access. Two double bedrooms with fitted wardrobes, upgraded shower room and an attic room ideal for guests or a home office. A superbly convenient setting surrounded by cafes, restaurants, parks, schools and excellent transport links.

19 Warrenmount Place, Blackpitts, Dublin 8.
Mid Terraced. PRICE: €550,000



2 c. 59 Sq.M / 635 Sq.Ft BER D3 No. 101340446

A hidden gem in Dublin 8, No. 19 is a beautifully refurbished two-bedroom home that perfectly combines period charm with modern comfort. Ideally located just off Clanbrassil Street, it's moments from cafes, restaurants, Grafton Street and St Stephen's Green. Set on a quiet, characterful street, this property offers a high-quality upgrade in a prime city location.

7 Field's Terrace, The Triangle, Ranelagh, Dublin 6, D06 Y2N6. Phone: (01)255 1313
N°15 Terenure Place, Terenure, Dublin 6W, D6W HY68. Phone: (01)255 2489

WWW.MULLERYOGARA.IE

‘My son was suicidal at ten but all we got were waiting lists’

One mother’s ordeal shows the dearth of public services for children with severe mental health conditions. Her only route was to pay



Julianne Corr

The fear set in for Michele when she realised her deeply troubled ten-year-old son could soon be able to kill himself. “I had a child who wasn’t eating, who wanted to die and I thought, in a few years, when he’s 13, he’ll be able to do it. So how do I stop this now?” the 55-year-old mother from Terenure, Dublin, said. Her son, whom she has chosen not to name to protect his privacy, was rejected from the HSE’s Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs) in 2022 despite a GP referral stating he was suicidal. Four months later, after being put on a waiting list with no updates, she walked into the Lucena Clinic, a Camhs provider in Rathgar, with the referral letter, but her son was refused care two months after that. He was instead referred to primary care psychology and placed on another waiting list. Camhs treats moderate to severe conditions, while primary care supports mild cases. When Michele, who has a master’s degree in counselling and psychotherapy, called, she was told the waiting list was very long and was offered a six-week parenting course, which she declined. With no alternative, she began paying

privately, spending €5,000 in total on support, including a child psychologist, educational assessment, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. Some private child psychologists charge up to €180 per session. “I had a husband here who was pulling in enough finances to keep us going while I was minding my kid and working part-time myself,” she told The Sunday Times as part of our Young Minds Matter campaign. “But the overwhelming feeling that I had throughout this whole process was obviously that I was desperate and so sad, but I could actually throw money at it. What about all of these families that can’t?” Michele is a member of Families for Reform of Camhs, a group of more than 1,200 parents who have come together to highlight their experiences and are calling for urgent reforms in Camhs. A total of 12,102 children had referrals accepted to Camhs between January 1 and September 30 this year, up 14 per cent on the 10,626 across same period last year. Of these, just 63 per cent of new or re-referred cases were seen within 12 weeks. There were 4,047 children on the Camhs waiting list nationally at the end of September this year, with more than 500 of those children waiting over a year for services. At primary care level, 28,168 children aged five to 17 had referrals accepted by the end of September. More than 15,000



have been waiting over a year for an appointment, with delays in some areas of up to 13 years. Michele said her son’s difficulties were mostly around school-related anxiety. He has also been diagnosed with dyslexia and dyspraxia and has sensory needs. “By the time he was nine, we had done everything I thought possible and I was educating myself as best I could around childhood anxiety,” she said. “Then one day I was at the [school] campus and he told me that he didn’t want to live any more. I just happened to be standing in the car park crying when the principal walked past and he said, ‘What’s happening?’ I told him he doesn’t want to live ... and I don’t even know what to do. That’s when he suggested Camhs.” When Michele’s son was finally given a primary care appointment last summer after being on the waiting list for four years, she decided to take it as he was due to start secondary school. “We went in and I was told that there used to be eight child psychologists here and eight assistant psychologists but now there’s currently just one and that they’re leaving,” she said. “The whole thing was astonishing. We decided we’d go private again rather than keep spinning our wheels in a broken system.” Michele, who is from California but has lived in Ireland for 20 years, fears Ireland’s public health system is becoming like the US, where most care is delivered through private insurance, with limited public programmes for children, low-income families and older adults. “I thought it was amazing when I arrived here 20 years ago that there was this whole health system,” she said. “At the time there was a lot of complaining about ... this two-tiered thing taking off because some people were paying for health insurance and other people were languishing on waiting lists. That was the first inkling that I thought ... we’re going to have to start having to pay for all this.” Patricia Byrne, chair of the Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry within the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, which is the professional and training body for psychiatrists in Ireland and is backing our campaign, said attending a private psychologist was a considerable cost for parents. “These children need their basic developmental needs to be met, and many families are reporting spending large amounts of money arranging private therapy or assessments in the scenario of years-long waiting lists, and limited interventions,” she said. Michele’s son, who is now 14, is doing much better now thanks to private support and a “really good” special educational needs officer at his school.

“We were told there used to be eight child psychologists here but now there is just one – and they’re leaving”

Máirín Ní Chéileachair, director of education, research and learning at the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation, which represents over 46,000 teachers at primary level in Ireland, said there was a huge expectation on teachers to support children who had not been seen by primary care or Camhs. “An awful lot is falling back on teachers to try to provide support and provide information to the child and parent,” she said. “It is not at all uncommon for schools to fund a certain number of assessments, interventions or counselling for children.” In June 2023 the Department of Education launched a pilot programme providing counselling and mental health supports in primary schools. Under the scheme, one-to-one counselling is provided for pupils in certain primary schools in Cavan, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Mayo, Monaghan and Tipperary. In October last year this was extended to 61 urban Deis primary schools in southwest Dublin and north Dublin city. A department official said an external evaluation of the pilot had been completed by the Centre of Effective Services and the evaluation report, which would inform future policy and provision in this area, would be issued shortly. Ní Chéileachair said that having psychologists in some schools had been life-changing for some children. She added: “The research, particularly in the UK, has shown that this has effectively triaged a lot of children who were presenting with low-level anxiety or other difficulties that could be dealt with in an early or short-term intervention, and it has taken them off waiting lists.” Michele added: “One of the hard realities for us [Families for Reform of Camhs] is that we know that the work that we’re doing right now isn’t going to change anything for our kids, but hopefully it will change for future children. We can’t just leave this mess the way we found it.”

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A beautifully upgraded & extended semi-detached family home with uninterrupted views of Brighton Square. Set within landscaped front & rear gardens with rear laneway access, the property offers elegant & versatile living across multiple levels. Accom. comprises 2 spacious reception rooms, a light-filled open-plan kitchen/dining area with vaulted rooflights, cinema room, utility, four bedrooms inc. ensuites, family bathroom & large attic room. Brighton Square combines exclusivity, proximity to Rathgar Village, renowned schools, parks and excellent city-centre transport links.

7 Bushy Park Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6.
Semi Detached. PRICE: €2,500,000



6 c. 377 Sq.M / 4,058 Sq.Ft BER D1 No. 118384270
One of a pair of similar style homes overlooking Zion school and church to front and with magnificent south facing garden to rear backing onto The High School grounds. Wonderful layout with original features throughout and ample room to extend subject to p.p. Comprising hall, reception hall, 3 reception rooms, kitchen, utility, w.c., 6 bedrooms & bathroom. Well set back from the road with parking, side access. Beside Bushy Park, Milltown & Castle Golf Clubs, M50 etc.

8 Whitehall Road, Terenure, Dublin 12.
Semi Detached. PRICE: €1,250,000



5 c. 205 Sq.M / 2,207 Sq.Ft BER D2 No. 2118623244
A much sought-after red-brick pre-war semi-detached family home (c. 2,206 sq.ft / 205 sq.m) boasting a stunning OP kitch/din/family room extension. Beautifully upgraded & full of natural light, this spacious 5 bedroom home (1 ensuite) features elegant accommodation & a large south-facing rear garden c.90' long. Ideally located near Terenure village with excellent schools, shops, cafes and parks nearby. Convenient access to the city centre and M50.

40 Casimir Road, Harold's Cross, Dublin 6W.
Semi Detached. PRICE: €1,000,000



3 c. 148 Sq.M / 1,593 Sq.Ft BER D2 No. 118935949
A beautifully maintained red brick period home c.148 sq.m / 1,590 sq.ft. This elegant property features generous proportions, original period detail & a bright kitchen extension. Two large interconnecting reception rooms, three spacious bedrooms and a sun-filled south-west facing garden with side access combine to create an exceptionally charming home. Perfectly positioned beside Harold's Cross, Terenure, Rathgar and Rathmines, with excellent schools, shops, cafes and transport links all nearby. Within easy reach of the city centre. GFCH.

111 Leinster Road, Rathmines, Dublin 6.
Mid Terraced. PRICE: €1,250,000



3 c. 164 Sq.M / 1,766 Sq.Ft BER Exempt
A most attractive and deceptively spacious villa style home with ample parking to front and south facing garden to rear c. 51 metres long. With added benefit of magnificent modern garage c. 12.3 x 5.8m with access to Leinster Road West. Comprising of a reception hall, lounge, Bedroom 1, return bedroom 2 and bathroom. Garden level - separate entrance - kitchen/ dining, living, sunroom, bedroom 3, W.C/W.H.B. Glasshouse, study/store

188 Rathfarnham Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. Semi Detached. PRICE: €1,200,000



3 c. 172 Sq.M / 1,850 Sq.Ft BER D1 No. 106445968
A wonderful opportunity to acquire this spacious family home. Renovated over recent years with magnificent extension to rear, attic conversion & large secluded garden to rear. Parking to front & garage. Comprising hall, w.c., w.h.b., 2 inter-connecting reception rooms, L-shaped kitchen/ dining/ living, 3 bedrooms, bathroom, attic room. GFCH. Double glazed. Beside Rathfarnham Village, Bushy Park, schools etc.

6 Laurel, Hazeldeane, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
Duplex Apartment. PRICE: €1,100,000



3 c. 152 Sq.M / 1,636 Sq.Ft BER B3 No. 118835602
An impressive top-floor duplex apartment ideally positioned off Angles Rd, mins' walking distance to Ballsbridge & Donnybrook. This elegant D4 residence offers well-appointed & versatile accom, comprising hall, liv/ din, kitch, b'fast rm & bedroom 1 (currently in use as home office) & shower rm. Upstairs boasts 2 further dbl bed rms, both w/ en-suite. A south-facing balcony & uninterrupted views of Merrion Cricket Club Grounds. A prime setting near Herbert Park, the RDS & Aviva Stadium.

8 Bessborough Parade, Rathmines, Dublin 6.
Mid Terraced. PRICE: €1,050,000



3 c. 140 Sq.M / 1,507 Sq.Ft BER Exempt
A meticulously restored Regency (circa 1847) home superbly located a short walk to both Ranelagh & Rathmines Villages. Tastefully presented throughout. Accommodation: Reception hall, living, dining, kitchen, utility, downstairs wc, 3 bedrooms (one ensuite/bathroom) and Attic/home office. Tunde Perry Designed Landscaped Garden. Close to local schools, shops and Luas at Ranelagh & Charlemont. Pedestrian Rear access.

60 Heytesbury Street, Portobello, Dublin 8.
End of Terrace. PRICE: €875,000



3 c. 195 Sq.M / 2,099 Sq.Ft BER Exempt
A fine 3-storey period house sub-divided into 3 units and ideally suited conversion to a family home or home/income. Retaining original features with excellent proportions, full of natural light & west-facing garden to rear. Highly sought after location beside local cafes, restaurants, schools, LUAS and walking distance to St. Stephen's Green and Grafton St. c. 195 sqM/ 2,099 sqFt.

21 Dodder Road Lower, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. End of Terrace. PRICE: €850,000



3 c. 119 Sq.M / 1,281 Sq.Ft BER F No. 116143553
A charming 1930s home on Lower Dodder Rd, overlooking the picturesque Dodder Greenway & rich in period character. Featuring high ceilings, original fireplaces & elegant proportions throughout. The light-filled accom comprises 2 interconnecting rec rooms, a bright kitchen/dining area and 3 generous bedrooms. A beautiful 50ft south-facing garden offers a tranquil retreat. Ideally located near Rathgar, Terenure & transport links, this home combines character, comfort & a superb riverside setting.

27 Orwell Hall, Marianella, Rathgar, Dublin 6. Apartment. PRICE: €725,000



2 c. 94 Sq.M / 1,012 Sq.Ft BER A3 No. 1097780429
Superb 2-bedroom ground floor apt in this exclusive dev, offering luxury, space and tranquility in a prime Rathgar location. Residents enjoy exceptional amenities inc gym, sauna, concierge, private cinema within beautifully landscaped grounds. Bright, high-spec home feats a spacious living area, Miele kitchen, 2 dbl beds (main en-suite & walk-in wardrobe) 2 private patios. A turnkey opp combining contemporary elegance in one of Dublin's most sought-after addresses.

1 Prouds Lane, Off St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2. End of Terrace. PRICE: €590,000



3 c. 114 Sq.M / 1,227 Sq.Ft BER G No. 1171002277
A rare period residence w/ superb potential, ideally positioned just off St. Stephen's Green. Offering one of Dublin's most coveted & convenient addresses, the property is moments from Grafton St, leading workplaces, cafes, parks & excellent transport links including LUAS Green Line & multiple bus routes. Set over 3 levels with a private rear yard, it offers exceptional scope for reconfiguration/ refurbishment. A prime D2 opportunity w/ outstanding lifestyle & investment appeal.

8 Rugby Villa's, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.
Mid Terraced. PRICE: €585,000



2 c. 80 Sq.M / 861 Sq.Ft BER D2 No. 118971696
A charming Butterfly brick period home moments from Ranelagh, Rathmines and the Luas. Bright open-plan living/dining room with Le Droff-style fireplace, modern shaker kitchen and a sunny south-facing courtyard with rear access. Two double bedrooms with fitted wardrobes, upgraded shower room and an attic room ideal for guests or a home office. A superbly convenient setting surrounded by cafes, restaurants, parks, schools and excellent transport links.

19 Warrenmount Place, Blackpitts, Dublin 8.
Mid Terraced. PRICE: €550,000



2 c. 59 Sq.M / 635 Sq.Ft BER D3 No. 101340446
A hidden gem in Dublin 8, No. 19 is a beautifully refurbished two-bedroom home that perfectly combines period charm with modern comfort. Ideally located just off Clanbrassil Street, it's moments from cafes, restaurants, Grafton Street and St Stephen's Green. Set on a quiet, characterful street, this property offers a high-quality upgrade in a prime city location.

7 Field's Terrace, The Triangle, Ranelagh, Dublin 6, D06 Y2N6. Phone: (01)255 1313
Nº15 Terenure Place, Terenure, Dublin 6W, D6W HY68. Phone: (01)255 2489

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Thousands of vulnerable children at risk after Camhs rejection

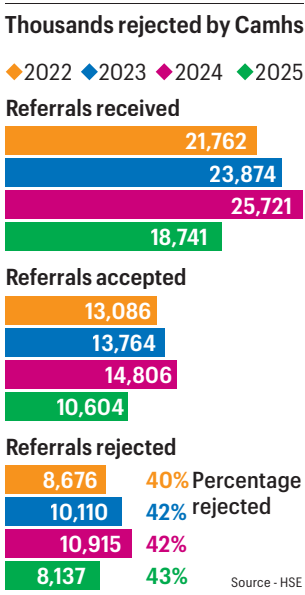


Julianne Corr

Almost half of all children sent to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs) this year have been turned away, with some young people at risk of suicide instead seeking help in overwhelmed hospital emergency departments. New HSE figures show a total of 8,137 children had referrals rejected by Camhs up to the end of September this year, which is 43 per cent of all referrals received by the service. In Dublin and the

northeast, the rejection rate rose to 55 per cent. Camhs provides assessment and treatment for young people under 18 with moderate to severe mental health difficulties, usually accessed via GP referral. Primary care psychology treats children with mild to moderate difficulties. Last year 10,915 Camhs referrals were rejected, representing 42 per cent of all cases. In 2023, 10,110 children were also denied access, again representing 42 per cent. Rory O'Brien, clinical lead for paediatric emergency medicine at Cork University Hospital, said children were presenting to emergency departments "every day" in

acute mental health crises after long waits for Camhs or primary care – or having been refused access entirely. "We're seeing several every day, but we're only seeing the pointy end of the stick here as there's a huge amount of children out there who aren't coming in because everyone knows what it's like when you come into an ED," he told The Sunday Times Young Minds Matter campaign. One 49-year-old mother from the Midlands said she was forced to take her 12-year-old daughter to an emergency department in the middle of the night in January 2023 because she feared the girl would harm herself.



The child, then in first year at secondary school, had been on a Camhs waiting list for five months with escalating anxiety and depression. At the time of referral, she told her GP she "couldn't see herself reaching her 16th birthday". "It was a complete last resort," her mother said. "She kept saying, 'My brain won't stop.' She was really distressed and agitated and I just didn't know what to do. "When we got there they said they would put through an urgent referral for Camhs and we ended up getting an appointment a day or two later. It felt like because she had gone through A&E that they were treating it

seriously now." But despite finally accessing the service, the family's experience was "poor", leading to more emergency department presentations, including after a paracetamol overdose, and a four-week admission to St Patrick's hospital in Dublin, where the girl spent her 13th birthday. The mother had to give up work to care for her. During this time she also arranged a private autism assessment, which confirmed a diagnosis while the girl was in St Pat's. Eventually they were seen by a locum consultant in Camhs. "I ended up walking out of one of the appointments crying because he was so dismissive. He was basically

saying, 'We think it's autism and Camhs can't help you,'" the mother said. By summer 2023, the relationship between the teenager – who had missed a year and a half of school – and her Camhs clinical nurse had broken down. Her anxiety was repeatedly dismissed as "teenage angst" and the service attempted to discharge her. The mother turned to private care, paying €160 a week for a psychologist and €120 for occupational therapy. After eight sessions, the psychologist concluded the girl needed more intensive, continuous support than private practice could offer and was better

suited to the public system. Now aged 15 and in third year at secondary school, the teenager is taking Prozac, an antidepressant, but is still being refused psychological support by Camhs. "I was told my child was not complex enough for the CDNT [children's disability network teams], had needs that were too severe for primary care, and then Camhs didn't know how to manage autism. There's a massive gaping hole there," the mother said. O'Brien said: "The ED is not the right place for a child in crisis. We need rapid access clinics, community hubs – something drastic needs to happen."

Far right not republicans, warns Saoradh

Extremists who pose with guns while standing in front of tricolour disowned by group that backs the New IRA

John Mooney
Investigations Editor

Dissident republicans have delivered a blunt warning to emerging far-right groups trying to cloak themselves in the imagery and language of the IRA. Saoradh, the political organisation that supports the New IRA, and the Irish Republican Prisoners Welfare Association (IRPWA) have disowned far-right extremists who have begun styling themselves as republican paramilitaries in videos circulating online. They insist these groups are "not republicans" and have warned that anyone jailed for offences linked to far-right activism will not be recognised as republican prisoners or housed alongside dissidents in either the Republic or Northern Ireland. Republican prisoners serve their sentences in segregated prison landings and receive extra privileges. Brian Kenna, a member of Saoradh's national executive, told a meeting of dissidents in south Dublin last week that far-right groups represented a distortion of republicanism. "They are populist. They are a nuisance and don't have massive support," he said. "They are now trying to steal the identity of republicanism and taking advantage of the issues caused by the housing crisis. They are not a long-term threat." Kenna's remarks were backed by Sean Hanna of the welfare association whose organisation raises funds for families of republican prisoners. Hanna told the meeting that far-right prisoners would not be supported by the IRPWA, which raises money for dissident prisoners aligned to various factions. The intervention comes as far-right activists increasingly try to tap into discontent around immigration by styling

“**These populists are trying to steal our identity**”



Brian Kenna: "Far right is distorting republicanism"

themselves as republican paramilitaries. Some groups have released videos of masked men wearing balaclavas, holding military-style weapons and standing in front of tricolours issuing threats and anti-immigrant statements. Among them is the New Republican Movement, which recently posted a video featuring three masked men holding handguns and military weapons in front of a tricolour, threatening politicians and those who support immigrants or the opening of accommodation centres. In the video, the men described themselves as "patriots" who were "frustrated with mass immigration and the sexual indoctrination of children in school". The group also threatened to take action against local politicians, whom it described as legitimate targets. The Police Service of Northern Ireland has commenced an investigation. Other self-styled paramilitary groups include the Irish Defence Army, which is alleged to have discussed arson attacks on mosques. In Belfast, dissidents have already begun to target people accused of involvement with far-right groups. They have adopted the cover name Socialist Republican Front (SRF) and have been known to use pipe bombs. SRF has threatened a group called Clann Eireann, which is accused of vandalising republican graves in the city's Milltown Cemetery and attacking murals expressing a welcome to migrants. Security sources say that a small number of fringe dissidents, who are involved in organised crime and extortion, have gravitated towards anti-immigrant activism, providing an opportunity to build a support base and extort money.

SANTA CLAUSES ARE COMING TO TOWN



Crowds of people dressed as Santa Claus throng the streets of New York for the city's annual SantaCon, in which participants are urged to wear a costume, spread joy and "not drink more than Santa can handle"

No to high tax for a united Ireland

Jason Johnson

Voters have put a price tag on the question that has fired political passions in Northern Ireland for a century – and it seems constitutional preferences come with a hard spending cap. The University of Liverpool's Institute of Irish Studies asked people not just how they would vote in a border poll, but how much extra tax they would be prepared to pay each year to get their preferred outcome. Among those who would vote for Irish unity tomorrow or within 15-20 years, fewer than one in five (17.5 per cent) were willing to pay £5,000 more if unity were delivered. Six in ten said they would not. Some 20.9 per cent would accept a £3,000 rise, with 53.7 per cent opposed. More than a third, 35.1 per cent, would not pay £1,000 extra in taxes, and 48.3 per cent would not accept higher rents and living costs to achieve a united Ireland. Supporters of the Union were no more willing to dig deep. Among those who said they would vote to remain in the UK, only 11.7 per cent were willing to pay £5,000 a year more in tax, and 16.6 per cent would pay £3,000. In each case, close to two thirds said they would not. Forty per cent said they would not pay £1,000 extra tax and 52 per cent would not accept higher rents and living costs to stay in the UK. Professor Peter Shirlow, who led the survey, said it was a clear message. "Aspirations can be conditional," he said. "What people might want and what they are prepared to pay for are not the same." The November survey involved 1,534 voters, with results weighted to be representative of the Northern Ireland electorate.

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Taoiseach to foster more resilience to hybrid attack

→ Continued from page 1

subsea cables in the Baltic Sea and physical attacks that had taken place in Poland and other EU states. "There is an increase in hybrid attacks of different types, some involving arson and others hiring low-level criminals to do damage. Europe is on increased alert and it's obviously related to the war." The taoiseach said he believed Ireland should foster national resilience across all sectors of society. He said he also wished to harness and integrate Irish expertise towards protecting the country and developing a stronger sense of national resilience, especially in respect of critical undersea infrastructure, cybersecurity and other areas including ports. "I've asked the relevant minister to factor in security considerations in terms of making our ports more robust and resilient to potential hybrid attacks because trade is of essence to the island and our economic security." Martin is credited with doing more than his predecessors to protect Ireland's political institutions and the economy by strengthening the state's defence posture through planning, investment and diplomacy. He rejected any suggestions that Ireland was engaging in warmongering or was moving away from its stated position of neutrality. "Europe doesn't want conflict. Russia caused this war and has created all this tension, but Europe is realising that it has to simply create a great resilience itself and that's what's motivating the rearmament and the greater investment in defence capability. It's not warmongering, it's just dealing with reality." He said Ireland would support Ukraine joining the EU as soon as 2027, as proposed by the most recent peace plan that would overturn the established accession procedure. He also said the government supported unfreezing billions of Russian assets held in the EU to fund Ukraine's defence and reconstruction. "We're not members of Nato. We're not part of a military alliance. However, this is European Union policy. The invasion of Ukraine is a violation of the UN charter. We've never been politically neutral. Here is a state that has been violated, in its sovereignty, in its territory, and integrity. "We also believe that the future cannot be where a big power believes it can simply go in and destroy a country, kill people, and then destroy the infrastructure, and then Europe has to pick up the tab afterwards. There has to be some financial economic deterrence to deter this behaviour into the future." The taoiseach's comments come as Ireland moves carefully to realign its security and defence posture while maintaining its stated policy of neutrality. This strategic realignment is taking place on all fronts. Last week Ireland agreed to support the use of the EU's €175 billion Horizon project to fund research into dual-use technology that might have defence applications. James Lawless, the higher education and innovation minister, said the decision took into account how the international security environment had rapidly evolved. He said it was important for Ireland to be seen to do everything to protect itself but also Europe. "The mood among the majority of member states is very much that some of them feel under attack; some of them are under attack, certainly from hybrid forms, if not full-frontal assaults," he said. "We have a common interest in European defence."

Blame game erupts on Fianna Fail's Aras fiasco

→ Continued from page 1

voted for him, and if so, what was done to get to the bottom of it. Furthermore, John McGuinness, the Carlow-Kilkenny TD, said that many members would be looking for accountability following the publication of the report, which is expected this week. "Those responsible need to accept responsibility and it falls to the leadership and to Micheál Martin," McGuinness said. "I would caution all of those involved

Micheál Martin led his party behind GAA star Jim Gavin

to be honest and to be direct and to place the blame wherever it should be placed. The days of ducking and diving are over – it has cost us in terms of our public profile hugely, and financially." He said if it were the private sector and a significant sum of money had been lost, "the culprits would be sacked and the company would move on". When asked whether he thought the Fianna Fail leadership should step down from their roles, McGuinness said: "We need to see the report and to see exactly what happened. It needs to be given to the parliamentary party and then people can make up within their own minds what they believe should happen next." TDs are anxious to see the report before the end of term and have said pushing it further into 2026 would not be a good look for the party in its centenary year. "This has dragged on long enough. There are a lot of people who just want to move on at this stage," one TD said. "We need to be seen to be doing the work we were elected to do, and fulfilling our promises in the programme for government."

Coalition on the skids, pages 6-7

Alison O'Connor and Leo Varadkar, page 19

‘My suicidal children can’t get the support that they clearly need from Camhs’



Christmas in a household with three teenage children is typically a chaotic but joyful affair: presents to unwrap, festive films on repeat, trips to the cinema or ice rink, and a steady rotation of friends and cousins drifting in and out, buoyed by the rare luxury of two unstructured weeks away from school.

But the festive period in Sarah's home is very different.

Her three children – two girls and a boy, aged between 12 and 16 – are all grappling with serious mental health difficulties. For their mother, Christmas is less about celebration than survival.

The eldest child, who has been diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder, autism and dyspraxia, is attending Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs) in the southwest of the country. She was initially referred several times but rejected, despite having stopped eating, drinking and sleeping.

It was only after two “distressing” visits to the emergency department and the intervention of a local TD that she finally secured an appointment last year. She is now home-schooled.

Sarah's middle child, previously diagnosed privately with ADHD and autism, has a history of self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Despite being referred urgently to Camhs by his GP six months ago, he was refused access. After Sarah sent what she describes as a “detailed letter of concern”, her son was placed on a waiting list – but he is still waiting.

The youngest child, still in primary school, was referred to both Camhs and primary care two months ago after engaging in self-harm and experiencing suicidal thoughts. She was refused by both services.

Primary care, which treats mild to moderate cases, said her needs were too severe; Camhs said she did not meet its threshold. She is now being supported by Pieta, the mental health charity, which has assessed her as high risk, while her mother pursues a formal complaints process with the HSE.

Sarah – whose name has been changed to protect the identity of her children – said her family still marked Christmas last month, but that festivities were “very low-key”.

“It has always been a pretty stressful time in our family, in particular for my eldest, who has high expectations for the day but then tends to get overwhelmed, so we have adapted the way we celebrate a lot over the years,” she told The Sunday Times's Young Minds Matter campaign.

“My two eldest struggle with surprises; one finds unexpected gifts really difficult, the other struggles to regulate his excitement. We usually discuss and agree on presents and the way they are given beforehand. We keep it a little magical by putting them under the tree and having some small ‘safe’ surprises.

“Our Christmas is basically just a quiet day without visitors with a bigger meal. Christmas dinner is a challenge, as are any family dinners, due to the kids' different needs and temperaments, but we do our best and keep it short.”

The 51-year-old, who has given up her career to care for her children, said the

One mother tells how Christmas is a battle for her family’s survival as she fights to get mental health support for her son and daughters, writes *Julieanne Corr*



biggest adjustment for her and her husband had been learning to “let go of expectations”.

“Our Christmas holidays are very quiet and we mostly stay at home as days out with all three kids are too difficult,” she said. “We split up for the limited activities we do, but a break from the stresses of school is always welcome in our house. I have actually spent a lot of the holidays completing paperwork for upcoming assessments for my daughter.

“We don’t do days out, we don’t visit people or have people come to our house and we don’t go on holidays. Those things we just don’t do as our kids’ needs aren’t compatible.”

Sarah said returning to school tomorrow would be a difficult adjustment for her two youngest children, who were still waiting to access Camhs support.

“A two-week break is tricky because we’re just in the groove this week where things are easier, and then on Monday we need to go back to school. We kind of just take things as they come, because you can never predict and everyone has a different trigger,” she added.

A total of 8,137 children had referrals rejected by Camhs up to the end of August last year, which was 43.4 per cent of all referrals received by the service. In 2024, 10,915 Camhs referrals were rejected – 42 per cent of all cases.

Of the 12,102 children who had referrals accepted to Camhs between January 1 and September 30 last year, just 63 per cent were seen within 12 weeks. There were 4,047 children on the Camhs waiting list nationally at the end of September last year, with more than 500 of those children waiting more than a year for services. Sarah said that her main

frustration with the system was the absence of a single point of access for Camhs, primary care and children's disability network teams.

“It’s so much additional work, effort and weight for GPs and parents, because you’re forever chasing the different services in a circle, rather than there being a single point of referral and initial triage for mental health,” she said.

“It is relevant in relation to my youngest daughter, who was refused by both primary care and Camhs for exceeding and not meeting thresholds respectively, so is in effect falling through the gap. Our GP has now re-referred her, and I have also contacted the HSE complaints service, but it should not require this much chasing to get a child waitlisted to even just get them assessed for support they clearly require.

“It is currently too easy for services to

bounce responsibility between one another, risking that parents eventually give up seeking help for their children and/or the child's mental health deteriorating.”

Sarah said a further issue was the lack of any structured support for children while they remained on waiting lists, leaving parents to manage risk at home alone. “Facing waitlists is one thing, not knowing where to turn when refused on referral, or remaining unsupported while on a lengthy waitlist with no idea of likely timeframes, is another,” she said.

“My daughter had severe OCD and she was constantly washing her hands, not eating, drinking or sleeping much. How many months can you do that as a parent without getting any support, or even a signpost to say in the case of OCD, here’s what you do – just some sort of guidance?”

Sarah said that despite years of navigating services, she had never been provided with the support necessary to understand why each of her children struggled in different ways.

“I suspect there’s something genetic in the kids, but they’re very different characters and they’ve very different trajectories outside – because it’s not just home that influences their behaviour, there’s school too,” she said.

“It’s always when they turn around six or seven when they start primary school that they’ve all started struggling. Then when they hit secondary school, they struggled again. I would say that with the girls especially, it was very clear when they were young that there was something different about their development. Not that we struggled at the time, but just compared to other kids.”

“It is too easy for services to bounce responsibility for children’s care between one another

Tweed mill weaved fashion fortune out of long-lost designs

Lovat had fallen apart at the seams when it was bought 26 years ago. A Victorian find changed everything, writes *Lottie Hayton*

Lovat is one of the most celebrated tweed mills in Scotland, producing fabric that has graced the runways of Milan and Paris, for designers including Dolce & Gabbana and Dries Van Noten. But that future was a long way off when Stephen Rendle and Alan Cumming bought the rundown mill in the Scottish Borders town of Hawick back in 1999.

At the time tweed, which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year, was out of fashion, and the mill was in a state of disrepair. It was a leap of faith, says Rendle, 70, who along with Cumming had spent most of his career designing and exporting cloth for a leading textiles group; “It was about breathing life into something that had wallowed.” While the men set about restoring the building, hauling around looms that weigh 2.5 tonnes each, however, the actual ingredient that would renew the fortunes of the mill, and some may argue of tweed itself, was gathering dust in the attic: 15 design books that dated back 135 years.

To mark the anniversary, Lovat’s owners are telling the story of how they discovered the archive, which contained more than 500 swatches from the Victorian era, for the first time. It was found by chance in the middle of the renovation, says Rendle. “We went to the mill and came across this wonderful box of designs from the 1800s, [full of] handwritten designers’ notebooks – that’s very rare.” Tweed is a central part of Scotland’s cultural heritage, and the Lovat mill is at the heart of the story. To make tweed the wool is dyed and blended, before being spun into yarns. These are then weaved on a loom to create complex patterns, before the fabric is inspected and finished.

While Harris tweed, which is woven in the Outer Hebrides, is the best known, it is Hawick tweed that reputedly gave the material its name. In 1826, a neighbouring Hawick weaver to Lovat, William Watson & Sons, sent a batch of “tweels” (the Scots word for twill) to a London merchant who misread the handwriting as “tweeds”. The potential for associating the fabric with the River Tweed and countryside pursuits such as fishing and

shooting made the name stick. Watson’s mill has long since been demolished, leaving Lovat mill as one of the last remaining manufacturers in the “birthplace of tweed”.

When Rendle and Cumming discovered the books, “we realised we were sitting on a goldmine, the very DNA of Scottish tweed,” Cumming, 63, says. “Hundreds of designs, all handwritten, all still usable. It was like the mill tapping us on the shoulder and saying, ‘Well? What are you going to do with this?’” The books included designs such as the Shepherd’s Check – woven in black and white yarns – which was originally created for shepherds on large estates to carry newborn lambs.

At that point the mill was unknown to the fashion world. The pair produced samples using the archives, loaded them into an old Peugeot, and drove across Europe to Italy to meet industry contacts. They landed a contract with Dolce & Gabbana, launching them as a supplier for other fashion houses, including Chanel, Gucci and Prada. Stella Tennant, a Scottish model and friend of the pair, first introduced them to Dries Van Noten, a Belgian designer, in 2004, who later put the Lovat label on the front of a sweatshirt in his autumn/winter 2017-18 collection.

Cumming and Rendle popularised stretch tweed – a modern variation of the tightly woven dyed natural wool containing elastic fibres to improve flexibility. They created a stretch tweed for Madonna for countryside sports that her ex-husband Guy Ritchie still wears today, while David Beckham and Taylor Swift have also worn their fabrics.

Their most famous client, however, is the King. Rendle met him in 2019 and was struck by his enthusiasm for the fabric. “He knows so much about tweed, and we said we’d help him design his own.” In 2020, they created the Dumfries House tweed to be worn with his coronation tartan. The weight of the cloth is exclusive to the King.

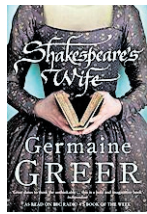
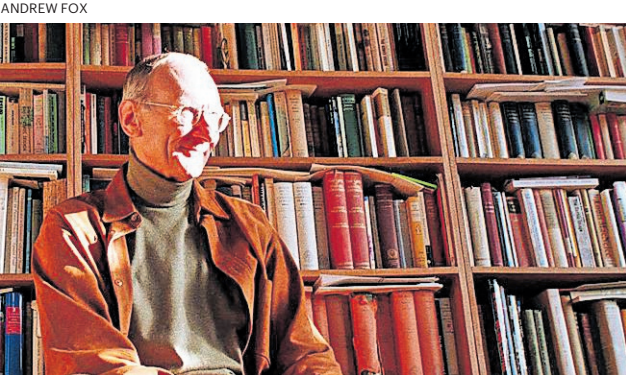
This year, to celebrate the anniversary, the mill is releasing 17 designs from the archive books. “Tweed has as much future as the past,” Cumming said. “Good tweed is exactly what the world is crying out for: natural, durable, beautiful and made to last.”

Taylor Swift in a Thom Browne skirt in Lovat tweed



Three reviews that show how John Carey’s wit opened a new critical chapter

Biting insights flow through these pieces by the chief literary critic of The Sunday Times who died last month



Shakespeare's Wife
Germaine Greer, 2007

It is impossible to think of two minds more different than Germaine Greer's and Shakespeare's. The leading quality of Greer's mind is opinionatedness, whereas Shakespeare, so far as we can tell, had no opinions. He vanished into his plays, and trying to retrieve what he thought on any subject is like harvesting shadows.

This is frustrating for Greer, since her aim in her new book is to pin down Shakespeare's opinion about marriage, specifically his own. Only the barest facts are known for certain. When he married Ann Hathaway, a local farmer's daughter, in 1582, he was 18, she was 26 and three months pregnant. Susanna, their first child, was born in May 1583, and twins, Judith and Hamnet, in February 1585.

Before or soon after that

Shakespeare probably left Stratford, and by 1592 he was already well known as an actor and dramatist in London, where he spent most of his married life. When he made his will in March 1616, a month before his death, his wife was not mentioned at all in the first draft, and a redraft left her his second-best bed.

Some scholars (most of them, Greer notes accusingly, male) have taken these facts to mean that Shakespeare was trapped into marriage by a designing older woman; that he was frogmarched to the altar by her family; that, like many women of her class, she was probably illiterate, and certainly unable to appreciate her husband's greatness.

Greer is convinced that, on the contrary, Shakespeare wooed Ann, not vice versa; that she proved a good, true wife, enjoying her husband's love and respect; and that she took a keen interest in his writing, and was quite possibly instrumental in getting the First Folio of his works printed after his death.

Exactly what she was successful at is difficult to decide. Greer thinks she might have been a successful moneylender. The one surviving document that may give a clue to her business activities, if she had any, is the will of the Hathaway family's shepherd, which says she owes him 40 shillings. This does not sound like successful moneylending, but perhaps, Greer thinks, the shepherd entrusted the money to Ann's safekeeping,

which could mean she was a successful banker. Alternatively, she might have been a farmer or a cheesemaker, a mercer or a haberdasher, a basket weaver or a lace maker or a stocking knitter.

Wherever Ann's success lay, she made enough money, Greer thinks, to bring up her family without her husband's help (though why he should not have helped her if she enjoyed his love and respect is not quite clear) and probably accumulated a lot more besides.

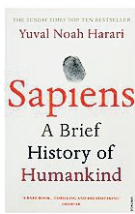
Quite possibly, in Greer's view, Ann, not Shakespeare, bought New Place. It is true that no papers relating to Ann's remarkable career have come down to us. But then, Greer reminds us, paper was

scarce, and old documents were used for all sorts of menial purposes, and there were a lot of mice about.

The uncertainty of the whole situation allows Greer to fill her book with vast amounts of extraneous material. There are lengthy digressions on Elizabethan farming, cheesemaking, haberdashery and Ann's other supposed occupations, packed with archival detail about the pigs, hens, household effects and genealogies of a great many people who, as Greer is perfectly willing to accept, may have nothing to do with Ann or Shakespeare at all.

In the same spirit there are sections on Elizabethan cottages, in case the Shakespeares ever lived in one, though they probably did not, and a stomach-churning excursion on venereal disease and its treatment, on the off-chance that Shakespeare suffered from it, although there is no evidence he did.

Threading this maze of blind alleys is the sort of reading experience that brings vividly to mind the many more useful and enjoyable things you might be doing.



Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind
Yuval Noah Harari, 2014

Sapiens is the sort of book that sweeps the cobwebs out of your brain. Its author, Yuval Noah Harari, is a young Israeli academic and an intellectual acrobat whose logical leaps have you gasping with admiration. That said, the joy of reading him is not matched by any uplift in his message, which is relentlessly accusatory and dismaying.

His book presents a brief history of life on earth, starting with the big bang and ending 1,000 years in the future, by which time, he predicts, Homo sapiens will be extinct, because science will have replaced us with genetically engineered immortals and “super-cyborgs”, part human, part machine, with faculties we can’t even imagine. The disappearance of old-style humans is not, it is clear,

“Maschler’s comments are uniformly banal

‘Ukraine is not safe’: Pussy Riot founder attacks plan for refugees

Ruby Hegarty

The Irish government’s proposal to offer financial incentives for Ukrainian refugees to return home has been described as dangerous and unsafe by a founding member of the Russian punk band Pussy Riot.

Speaking to The Sunday Times, Maria Alyokhina, a former prisoner in a penal colony who escaped Russia in 2022, said that western Europe was unaware of the security risk the country poses.

“[Ukraine] is not safe. It is a war going on, bombs are falling. Many people physically don’t have a home because it was bombed or

territory is occupied,” she said, after an appearance at the International Literature Festival Dublin at Merrion Square. “It’s hard to speak about Ukraine. I mean, the country is fighting the biggest army in European territory, they need help.”

The Irish government announced plans to withdraw free state-provided accommodation for Ukrainian refugees by March 2027 and to offer payments to encourage a return home.

For Ukrainian refugees who were enticed by proposed financial incentives, Alyokhina warned that many of their homes, jobs, schools and livelihoods no longer existed.

She said: “They [refugees] mostly have professions – they are lawyers, doctors, journalists – and they should start everything from the very beginning just because they made this choice [to leave]? It’s an honest choice not to support the fascist regime, to not give their children to the Russian army. People who are against this war are sitting in migration centres for years, waiting for residence permits. It’s unfair.”

Alyokhina said that the rhetoric surrounding refugees and asylum seekers “can be very populist”, as “right-wing people” leverage claims that there is not enough employment or



Maria Alyokhina is detained by Russian police in 2019. She lives now as a nomad

accommodation in Ireland. She added: “Mostly things are produced in China anyway, so what are we talking about?”

She claimed that European states, including Ireland, were misallocating public funds away from economic integration and into immigration enforcement. Instead of building infrastructure, governments were making “populist statements for getting this or that chair in power”.

The Pussy Riot member, who now lives as a nomad, has spent significant time in Ukraine as a political activist. Along with the proposed incentives to send Ukrainian refugees home, she criticised

Ireland’s stance of military neutrality, citing the ongoing war as not just a Ukrainian issue.

“That neutral position is also a political position. There is no choice which is not political. To stay aside is also a political choice,” Alyokhina added.

“[Ukraine] needs not just only weapons, they need human resources. I understand that it will be completely unpopular for anyone here to say, ‘yeah, we send the army to Ukraine’. Who wants their children to die for another country, right? So it will not be super popular.”

She warned that the danger stretched far beyond

the safety of refugees who return home. “If Ukrainian territory is given to Putin, it will be other countries that [they will] attack. It will be Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania they attack. Estonia, Latvia, Poland, countries which used to be Soviet Union republics are in danger. And if these territories are attacked, who will help them to defend themselves?” she added.

Alyokhina, who spent more than two years in a penal colony in the Ural Mountains, with temperatures of -35C, has since been sentenced in absentia to 13 years and 15 days in a maximum security facility. While she did not

want to leave Russia, she said that she “wanted to be useful” and could not freely act as she was arrested “just for my existence in the country”.

Now an Icelandic citizen, Alyokhina said that she did not think Russia was bad but that “the Russian state is”.

“People who are victims of the regime, who are standing against this war, who ran from the country without everything, just sacrificed their wealthy life just to speak against this regime and protest against this war, should have a possibility here at least to receive documents and try to help your country to build the economy,” she said.

Parents’ agony as CAMHS rejected suicidal children

Under-fire mental health service says changes are on the way with more staff and new information system



Julianne Corr

Almost half the children referred to the state’s child mental health service in 2025 were turned away, including some who were thinking of suicide or self-harm.

Figures from the HSE show that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) received a record 29,395 referrals last year. Of these, 12,756 (43 per cent) were not accepted for care.

The figures underline the pressure on CAMHS which already faces sustained criticism over access, safety and consistency of treatment. Referrals are usually made by GPs and have risen by 68 per cent since 2020.

Even for children accepted for treatment, delays were significant. At the end of April, 644 patients had waited more than a year for their first appointment.

Since last year the Young Minds Matter campaign by The Sunday Times has called for an urgent overhaul of CAMHS governance and operation.

The HSE said change was taking place with 202 more staff and a new digital system being developed to record, share and manage patient information.

CAMHS assesses and treats under-18s with “moderate to severe” mental health difficulties, while primary care psychology sees those classed as “mild to moder-

“
We asked for help. Two years later our child died

ate”. Specialised disability network teams support children with “complex disabilities and needs”, such as autism.

Families said that engaging with the present system could be a bleak experience, leaving them exhausted and defeated. In many cases CAMHS rejected a GP referral despite the child presenting with acute suicidal ideation and/or self-harm. Left behind by the state, some parents relied on Pieta House, the suicide and self-harm prevention charity.

A parent from Cork (who did not want to be named to protect privacy), told The Sunday Times that his child – who was refused access to CAMHS several times over 24 months but was eventually accepted in 2019 – took their own life aged 15 in 2021.

He said CAMHS had accused him and his wife of “abandoning their child” because they felt they could not “safely” take them home without a care plan.

“We were not parents refusing to care for our child. We were parents asking for help because we were afraid our child might die. We are not mental health professionals. We did not understand how the system worked. We were a family in crisis who desperately needed guidance and a plan. Two years later, our child died by suicide.”

According to Families for Reform of CAMHS, a group of more than 1,200 parents who have come together to highlight their experiences, 86 children were turned away from CAMHS in 2024 while experiencing suicidal ideation or intent.

Forty-four per cent of families reported that it took them “multiple GP referrals” before finally being accepted into the service.

Responding to the figures, the HSE said referrals that did not meet CAMHS’s criteria were sent back to the referrer for signposting to another service, such as Tusla or Jigsaw.

The 2026 HSE National Service Plan will implement several structural changes this year and next. The HSE told The Sunday Times that it intended to establish 11 “in-reach” teams designed to integrate support across primary care, CAMHS and the disability network.

Crucially, the HSE has promised to launch “a single point of access” which it claims “will ensure the right care at the right time”.

IN FULL BLOOM



Yomiko Chen models an outfit by the sustainable fashion brand Aoife McNamara at a fashion show for the Design and Crafts Council Ireland yesterday at Bord Bia Bloom 2026. The festival of gardening, food and sustainable living, which is celebrating its 20th year, continues today and tomorrow in Phoenix Park, Dublin

Bill for teacher cover hits €246m

Ken Foxe

Schools needed substitute teachers for almost 840,000 days over just seven months as the cost of replacement cover rose to nearly a quarter of a billion euros.

The figures were equivalent to about 400 substitute-teacher days for every school day between September and March. The Department of Education said the estimated cost of substitute cover climbed to €246 million, compared with about €220 million for the same period of the previous school year.

The number of substitute days needed in primary schools between September and March was just over 635,000. That compared with about 604,000 during the same period of the previous school year.

There was an enormous rise in January when substitute-teacher days totalled 104,028, according to records released under freedom of information legislation.

For post-primary schools, the number of substitute days in the first seven months of this school year came to 202,000. That was an increase of about 6.5 per cent on the previous year’s figure of about 189,000.

The Department of Education said the indicative cost per day for a replacement teacher at primary level was about €282, including holiday pay and employer PRSI. For post-primary teachers, the equivalent rate was about €274 per day.

A spokesman said: “In any school year, teaching vacancies can occur for different reasons, such as teachers taking statutory leave, which can be covered by substitute teachers.

“The number of substitute days and associated costs can vary due to factors such as levels of teacher absence, changes in leave entitlements, incremental salary scale progression and pay adjustments under national agreements.”

Civil servant accused of leaks arrested at airport

→ Continued from page 1

2001 for the unlawful use of a computer in his employment, which, on conviction, would be punishable by a maximum ten-year sentence.

Reporting restrictions were imposed, preventing journalists from revealing his address in Dublin, the specific government department in which he worked, or the overseas country implicated in the case. However, the judge denied a defence application to prevent the media from naming the accused.

Palmer said he arrested McKeeffe at departures and took him to a garda station, where the accused “made no reply” to the charge at 11.46pm on Friday.

Objecting to bail, Palmer told the court that an intelligence-led investigation into the civil servant was launched about a week ago.

He also told the court that further charges under the Official Secrets Act could be brought. The court was told McKeeffe had signed the Official Secrets Act when he started working for the department in 2016, and the SDU officer alleged that McKeeffe “clearly breached this”.

Palmer also raised significant flight risk concerns, saying the IT worker had used four other variations of names. He accepted McKeeffe had Irish citizenship but stated that he also had family in Ukraine’s Donbas region and no familial ties to Ireland.

Questioned by Peter Connolly, for the defence, the detective sergeant agreed that McKeeffe had no prior criminal convictions.

The solicitor said his client had visited the disputed region in Ukraine during the war to visit family, after a gap of 16 or 17 years. He contended that there was no significant travel pattern and that it was understandable he was worried about his family in that area.

The officer agreed the accused was a single man and had been in Ireland lawfully

since 2002 and had progressed to citizenship.

The court was told that since he commenced his government job, he had been employed in two departments. Palmer said the accused had worked on a department’s website and an online portal.

Connolly disputed the detective’s stance that his client had no ties to Ireland. He asserted that McKeeffe, who did not address the court, had a job with a pension and a mortgage in Ireland, and that his connections here did not just have to be family. He told the court that his client had changed his name because people had trouble pronouncing his original surname.

The defence argued that the case was likely to be heard at a higher level and that refusing bail could result in McKeeffe being on remand in the overcrowded prison system for up to two years, while he was presumed innocent. The judge held he was a flight risk and refused bail. His next hearing will be at Cloverhill district court on Tuesday. Legal aid was granted.

Toxic culture at hospital ‘hampered patient care’

→ Continued from page 1

actively and directly contributed to the entrenched, toxic “culture of fear” that crippled the department.

St Vincent’s confirmed it commissioned the 2020 report and stated that it had accepted its findings and recommendations in full. However, no staff member was disciplined. The hospital also confirmed it had alerted senior HSE officials to the findings at the time.

The Department of Health declined to answer specific questions but said it had been advised by the HSE that the hospital had commissioned an independent review and accepted its recommendations. The HSE, which funds St Vincent’s, referred all further questions back to the hospital.

Full report, page 9

Ministers’ cars clock up €8m and diesel is miles ahead of electric

Ken Foxe

The 52-strong fleet of cars that ferries around the taoiseach, tanaiste, ministers and other office holders has cost taxpayers more than €8 million in the past year.

Some of the newest vehicles are diesels and include an Audi A6 50 TDI Quattro registered this year and three Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDIs bought last year.

Two Hyundai Ioniqs, which are electric, have run up low mileages compared with the other cars.

An Garda Síochana said two vehicles were added to the fleet and one was sold in the past 12 months. It declined to provide purchase details or scrappage costs.

The overall cost of the ministerial car service was €8.4 million – mostly drivers’ pay.

The gardai declined to say how many officers are allocated to the ministerial pool but said their salaries

totalled €7.67 million. They said information on gardai who work in the special detective unit or the security and intelligence section was exempt from release under freedom of information criteria.

A further €311,000 was spent on fuel while costs for maintaining the fleet, with some vehicles more than ten years old, came to €436,000.

Most of the cars in use for ministerial transport are Audis, with some BMWs, Skodas, Ford Transit

vans and a single Mercedes. The gardai said they had no specific policy over buying electric or hybrid vehicles. The 52-vehicle fleet includes 25 diesels and 25 plug-in hybrids.

The two electric vehicles were brought into service in 2022 and 2023 when the Green Party was part of the government coalition.

The first, an Ioniq 5, has travelled 70,000km, less than most other cars bought that year. The second, an Ioniq 6 bought in 2023, has clocked up 27,708km.

Diesels remain the workhorses of the fleet, racking up tens of thousands of kilometres.

One 2022 Audi A6 Quattro has recorded 276,000km already. Two similar cars from the same year have exceeded 300,000km, the equivalent of seven times around the globe.

A 2019 BMW 530D has travelled 370,000km since it was added to the fleet.

Asked for an explanation of how decisions are made on when to replace cars, An Garda Síochana said there was no specific policy on it.

However, the released information shows that the oldest vehicles in the fleet were both registered in 2015. Another four were registered in 2016, one in 2017, and one in 2018.

The majority of the fleet – more than 80 per cent – dates from this decade, with about a dozen cars registered in either 2025 or 2026.



Simon Harris used a Mercedes to visit Stormont Castle

Trans inclusion ‘beginning of end’ for female sport, authority told

Ken Foxe

The inclusion of trans athletes in women’s events could signal “the beginning of the end for female sport”, a state body was warned.

A report commissioned by Sport Ireland on transgender participation found that the issue of trans women competing in female events was the most contentious debate among sporting bodies.

Coaches interviewed for the study were said to have “strong feelings”. “This group expressed empathy and even sympathy towards transgender individuals but typically they were even stronger advocates for

keeping females involved in sport and upholding the values of fairness and safety,” the report said.

The coaches said they feared that the number of teenage female participants would “drop significantly” if transgender and non-binary individuals were allowed to take part in female events.

The study, prepared by Carbmill Consulting in July 2023, reported repeated concerns about trans women using female changing rooms.

One sporting body said it had a policy where participants came dressed in their kit and went home without showering or changing.

The report said: “This

seems barely practical for this particular indoor team sport but totally impractical for other sports where, for instance, participants get wet and/or muddy.”

It said many female respondents had not raised any issues around “safeguarding” but instead wanted “privacy and dignity for women and girls”.

Fears were also raised around the participation of trans women in boxing and martial arts. The report said individuals competing in those sports were “adamant that allowing transgender women to compete against females in their sports was unsafe and possibly unlawful”. More

than one interviewee told the authors that watching a trans woman in MMA [mixed martial arts] was “akin to watching footage of violence against women”.

There were many sports where the governing bodies felt there was little issue. These included touch rugby, rounders and equestrianism.

Several unidentified sporting bodies were particularly worried about participation by girls, who already have high drop-out rates from sport in their early teens.

Some said making games more inclusive would lead to higher rates of participation but others said the opposite, including

members of the Islamic community.

The report said: “In one instance the parent of one of the players concerned explained that her daughter and her friend had been put in a position where they had no choice but to withdraw from [ladies’ football].”

Sporting organisations also said age was a major factor. The report said: “Around the onset of puberty was generally considered the point at which sports needed to be divided by sex.”

Overall there was general support for inclusion of the transgender community at “grassroots level” but it was “unworkable at elite level”.

The report said:

“Examples were given which would suggest that even at the recreational level, some sports lend themselves to safety concerns when lower-level competitors could cause injuries through lack of skill and movement control.”

Almost all said they had sympathy and empathy towards transgender individuals but that keeping females involved in sport, and fairness and safety, were their priority.

Many organisations said overall policy would end up being dictated by international federations and having local arrangements might be impossible.

Volunteers were also interviewed, especially

people who ran or oversaw competitions, and some said they planned to leave their roles. The report said: “They felt confronted by this topic and thought the sporting environment had become too difficult.”

Some national governing bodies expressed fears that they could lose funding if they did not conform to a future Sport Ireland policy on transgender inclusion. “Some intimated that they would only share their honest views on the topic if the consultation process could guarantee that their views would remain confidential.”

Overall, participants from both viewpoints felt the topic had “become

increasingly toxic and entrenched in nature”.

In interviews, transgender athletes described moves to exclude them as having left them “heartbroken, distraught, gutted and betrayed”. The report said: “Some of these were difficult to hear, and it was clear that emotions were very strong.”

It concluded that it would be difficult to find compromises, with views on both sides “polarised”.

Asked about the report, Sport Ireland said: “The inclusion and eligibility of transgender and non-binary people within sport has become an important issue and is attracting increasing scrutiny at a societal level.”

ADHD patients face €2,000 fee for assessment

Private clinics are charging thousands to diagnose the condition as the public waiting list grows to 2½ years

Julieanne Corr

Some private clinics are charging up to €2,000 for an ADHD assessment as public patients face waiting times of up to two and a half years for a diagnosis.

ADHD, a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects behaviour such as concentration and time management, affects about 5 per cent of the Irish population.

According to the HSE, about half of all new mental health referrals among adults and children are now for ADHD assessments. Figures provided to The Sunday Times show that the current waiting time for a public appointment for an ADHD assessment with the HSE is up to two and a half years in some areas.

The ADHD in adults national clinical programme’s model of care was launched in 2021. There are seven specialist adult ADHD services operating across Ireland, with four more due to open soon. Data from just seven of the 13 teams shows at least 1,082 adults are waiting for an assessment. In Kerry, the adult ADHD service has been closed to new referrals since October last year.

The HSE said its child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) did not collect data nationally on the presentation diagnosis, such as ADHD, of those waiting to be seen. It said as of June this year, there were 4,424 people on the waiting list for all services in CAMHS. Figures from 16 of the 18 teams across Ireland show at least 1,203 children are waiting for an ADHD assessment.

Smithsfield Clinic in Athboy, Co Meath, which provides a range of mental health services, charges €2,050 for an ADHD assessment for adults and €2,000 for children, and €150 for a consultation.

ADHDdoc, a Dublin-based mental health service, charges €2,000 for a psychological assessment for children aged 12-15. The same fee applies to those aged 16 and over, covering one hour of screening and testing, along with a GP assessment. A 60-minute psychiatry consultation costs an additional €350.

BetterCare Mental Health Services, which provides a range of supports and treatments, charges €2,000 for a 90-minute psychiatric ADHD assessment, which includes four post-diagnosis

“People feel forced to seek private help for it

therapy sessions. A psychological assessment for children and adolescents costs €1,600, while the adult equivalent is priced at €1,500. Siobhán Rohan, 30, from south Dublin, was recently refused an ADHD assessment by the HSE in her catchment area despite experiencing symptoms for more than ten years.

According to the refusal letter, Rohan’s catchment area of CH07 is currently not accepting referrals for adult patients.

Rohan is researching private clinics in the hope of getting an assessment, but is being quoted up to €1,500, with some operating only online. “I’m surprised there are adults on waiting lists at some clinics because I didn’t think any of them were open for adults,” she said.

Rohan believes she should be on prescribed medication for ADHD. “I honestly just feel hopeless,” she said.

Marie Sherlock, the Labour Party’s health spokeswoman, said: “The reality is that people feel forced to go and seek private assessments because the wait time for public is simply too long.”

Ken Kilbride, chief executive of ADHD Ireland, said there was a “big variability” in terms of what clinics were charging and the service patients were receiving.

“An ADHD assessment should take two to three hours but there’s work to be done beforehand,” he said. “If the patient has the time it should take about half a day in terms of doing all of that. For a qualified, senior psychologist or a consultant psychiatrist taking half a day to get your ADHD assessment is, yes, expensive but not that far out of the ballpark.”

Sarah Cassidy, founder and director of Smithsfield Clinic, said: “We generally do full psychoeducational assessment alongside of our ADHD assessment. We also include observation of the person while they are working through cognitive tasks, we have a whole host of checklists and we access collateral data from various sources. We do clinical interviews.”

BetterCare said psychiatric ADHD assessments were conducted by a consultant psychiatrist. “Prices on a whole, however, have increased: psychometric measures used, licences, insurances – both practitioners and company, rents and rates, overheads, secure platforms, secure healthmail services etc,” it said.

PROUDLEY DOES IT



Twenty-year-old Rachel Proudley of Great Britain celebrates after jumping clear to win the Defender puissance on Easy Boy de Laubry Z at the Dublin Horse Show. The rider, from North Yorkshire, is having a sensational year: she has also had two championship wins at the Pony of the Year Show in the UK

More delays at hospital as new row erupts

→ Continued from page 1

primarily changes required for final sign-off for building control regulations, for example emergency lighting. It is not credible to state that this is the reason for BAM’s lack of progress.”

The board is blaming a lack of resourcing on site for the issues. “BAM continues to resource the project insufficiently, with resources on site dropping from 900 in December 2024 to circa 550 in May, 520 in June and less than 500 for some weeks in July,” it said.

The builders, meanwhile, maintain that the site has always been properly staffed and is “currently resourced above the level that was anticipated for this late stage given the design changes that have occurred”.

A second row between the board and BAM has also emerged around granting CHI early access to the building.

The NPHDB said: “The areas identified for early access are not yet completed to the standard required by the contract.”

BAM, however, said that it offered early access last month but had not received a reply.

Asked whether it had confidence in the September 30 completion date, the board said it “holds BAM to account across several key performance indicators, and all of these are currently behind schedule”.

It said: “The independent third party responsible for administering the contract has since directed BAM to provide a realistic updated programme compliant with the contract. This is awaited.”

Tensions rise, pages 6&7; editorial, page 18

The children’s hospital was due to be completed soon



McGregor eyes court challenge over rules for presidential election

→ Continued from page 1

power to its people by calling a referendum to amend our current constitution.”

Despite signalling his intention to run for the presidency, McGregor has yet to seek a nomination through the formal channels. An online petition he launched last week to support his candidacy was signed by more than 14,000 people in only four days, although it is unclear how many of the signatures came from within Ireland. Only Irish citizens resident in Ireland can vote in a presidential election.

McGregor is a highly divisive figure. Hand, a former hairdresser from Dublin, won her civil case against him in November after a jury found he sexually assaulted her in a hotel in December 2018 – an accusation he denies.

Once named by Forbes as the world’s highest-paid

athlete, McGregor has no history of political activism but is perceived by some to be a figurehead for Ireland’s anti-immigration movement.

Considered something of a lightning-rod figure in the presidential contest, McGregor is attracting public attention by posting political statements to his 57 million followers on X and Instagram about his ineligibility to run.

Micheál Martin, the taoiseach, said last week that McGregor had still not sought a nomination. “The constitution has proven to be robust since its enactment in 1937 and we will continue to adhere to the constitution,” the Fianna Fáil leader said.

McGregor and his advisers are understood to be assessing the possibility of mounting a legal case to upend the nomination rules, which he says favour candidates with strong party-political support. He said he planned

to approach politicians about the issue this week.

“I believe it is of the utmost importance that the president of Ireland is represented by an individual separate from the political parties who have achieved, controlled and consolidated power in this country since the creation of the state,” he said.

In his statement, he suggested he wanted to see the introduction of amendments that would provide for direct forms of democracy, citing articles 47 and 48 of the 1922 constitution, which allowed citizens to demand referendums on certain laws and constitutional amendments. Neither provision has a direct equivalent in the 1937 constitution.

Legal experts said that any court challenge against the eligibility rules would be difficult, but they could not be definitive as to whether McGregor has a stateable case. Others described his argument as a political rather than a legal one.

Tom Hickey, associate professor at Dublin City University, said he did not believe McGregor had a case

in constitutional law but was making a political argument.

“The terms of the constitution around eligibility are clear,” Hickey said. “If somebody has popular support, they can gain access to the contest through electoral means by getting nominated in the ways set out in the constitution. He obviously has a different view, and no doubt there are others who would agree with him. They’re perfectly entitled to those views and they’re not bogus views, but they are political views.”

The president of Ireland serves as the head of state in a ceremonial role with little political power, although McGregor has signalled his desire to increase the influence of the office. Elections take place every seven years, with candidates directly elected by citizens.

The incumbent, Michael D Higgins, 84, is a renowned poet and former member of the Labour Party. The date for the next election has not yet been set but must occur before Higgins’s second term expires in November.

Gary Murphy, page 18

Hundreds arrested at huge Palestine Action protest

Dipesh Gadher, Harry Yorke and Dominic Hauschild

Police arrested hundreds of protesters who gathered in London yesterday to support Palestine Action, the activist group banned by the British government as a terrorist organisation.

More than 400 people flouted terrorism laws by descending on Parliament Square at 1pm to hold up handwritten placards bearing the slogan: “I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action.”

By 6pm, the Metropolitan Police, assisted by scores of officers drafted in from forces across Britain, had detained at least 365 people for supporting a proscribed organisation.

They included an 89-year-old Jewish refugee and Moazzam Begg, the former Guantanamo Bay inmate. La Pethick, another 89-year-old,



The Met Police made more arrests yesterday than at the poll tax riots in 1990

was carried away by officers on a folding chair after she refused to walk.

Pethick, a retired psychotherapist from near Hastings, East Sussex, said her family, including five

grandchildren, “fully supported” her decision to take part.

“We are having our right to peaceful protest being taken away,” she said.

Police made at least seven other arrests, including five for alleged assaults on officers.

The highest number of arrests previously made by

the Met at one protest is thought to be 339 at the poll tax riots in 1990.

The mass show of civil disobedience came as the UK considers imposing fresh sanctions on Israel as part of a suite of retaliatory measures should Binyamin Netanyahu press ahead with plans to fully occupy Gaza.

Officials in several UK government departments have been asked to look at “robust” contingency options that could be used if the Israeli prime minister pursues a military takeover of Gaza City.

Police moved in to start making arrests within a minute of yesterday’s protest beginning. In some cases, up to 12 officers were required to handcuff a person and haul them off to a police van. Officers were met with chants of “Shame on you” and “Genocide police, off our streets”.