**Research and evaluation strategy**
**2020 - 2023**

JIGSAW
Young people's
health in mind

# Contents

# Foreword

Since Jigsaw was established we have been committed to leading transformation in youth mental health. From the beginning this has involved a strong focus on contributing evidence to the emerging area of youth mental health and evaluating the services and supports that we provide.

Jigsaw has achieved successes in the area of research and evaluation over the years. For example:

- Developing an electronic evaluation and case management system for use in Jigsaw services that is core to evaluating, monitoring and enhancing the evidence base for our work.

- Authoring 10 papers in academic journals and delivering over 30 presentations at national and international conferences informing the sector nationally and internationally about the impact of the work that we do.

- Publishing two national youth mental health surveys, most recently the second My World Survey, in partnership with UCD (Dooley, Fitzgerald, O'Connor, & O'Reilly, 2019).

Our research and evaluation work has been undertaken by a small but dedicated team who have collaborated with the School of Psychology in UCD and worked with other colleagues nationally and internationally.

Jigsaw as an organisation, and the area of youth mental health, has grown and developed significantly in the past 10 years. We are now at a juncture where we need a new plan to guide our approach to research and evaluation over the coming years. This new research and evaluation strategy builds on our experience and expertise but also challenges us to be bold in our ambition.

The strategy is the result of a collective effort which has enabled us to articulate clearly the path ahead which will now focus on pioneering research, robust evaluation, and transformative evidence. I very much look forward to seeing the results of this work positively impact on the youth mental health sector in the years to come.

**Dr Joseph Duffy**
**Chief Executive Officer**
**Jigsaw**

# Introduction

In Jigsaw, we know that adolescence and early adulthood are vulnerable times when it comes to our mental health and that early access to mental health supports is critical in ensuring young people reach their full potential.

The promotion of an evidence-based approach to the provision of youth mental health supports has long been a core tenet of our work. Indeed, good quality evidence is widely recognised as a key contributor to improving health and health services, and in delivering better outcomes for individuals.

The need to develop a research and evaluation strategy was identified as a key objective in Jigsaw's strategic plan 2018-2020. This new strategy is outlined in this document and sets out a clear direction for Jigsaw's work in this area for the next four years. It was developed following consultations with key internal and external stakeholders, from Ireland and beyond.

The strategy aims to consolidate, nurture and build on Jigsaw's previous work in research and evaluation. However, it also reflects our desire to become a leading and trusted source of information on youth mental health, by generating additional evidence from research and evaluation that is more innovative, reliable and influential.

Ultimately, implementing this strategy will have a positive impact on the lives of young people in Ireland.

"**The need to develop a research and evaluation strategy was identified as a key objective in Jigsaw's strategic plan 2018-2020.**"

**Please note:**

In this strategy, the term evidence is used to refer to the findings from research and evaluation activities.

Although closely related and often overlapping, research and evaluation serve different purposes.

- The key goal of research is to produce new knowledge or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

- The purpose of evaluation is to establish the progress or success of a specific initiative or service model.

# Overarching aim, strategic priorities and enablers

## 1. Overarching aim
The overarching aim of this strategy is to:

**Establish Jigsaw as a leading and trusted source of information on youth mental health by undertaking pioneering research, robust evaluation, and providing transformative evidence to advance the mental health of young people in Ireland (aged 12-25).**

This encapsulates Jigsaw's ambition to be a leading and trusted source for information about youth mental health. It reflects the organisation's desire to generate evidence from pioneering research and rigorous evaluation, which is engaging and useful for a wide range of interested parties including researchers, policymakers, service providers and members of the public. Ultimately, this will assist Jigsaw to achieve its mission, and have a direct positive impact on the mental health of young people in Ireland.

## 2. Strategic priorities
This strategy has three key priorities, as depicted in the diagram below. Within each priority area, there are a number of objectives and actions, set out in this document.

## 3. Enablers
Five enablers have been identified which will support implementation of this strategy:

- Our people

- Infrastructure

- Finance

- Youth participation

- Academic partners

**Diagram:** *The three key strategic priorities*
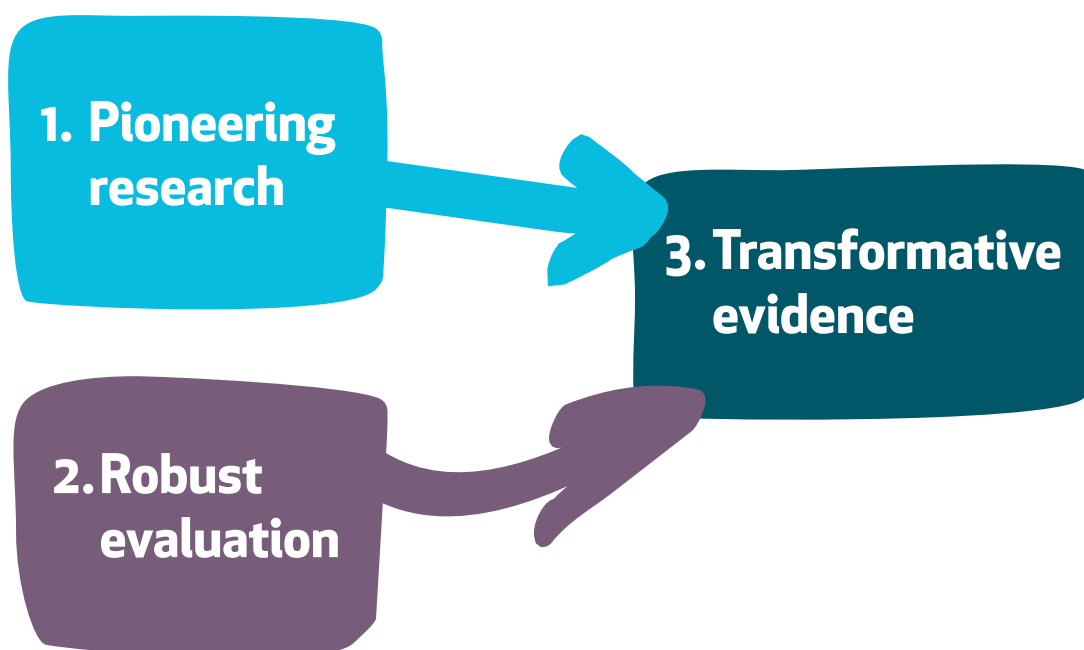
# Priority 1: Pioneering research

Pioneering research describes how Jigsaw will deliver innovative and internationally competitive youth mental health research in collaboration with key stakeholders, including academic partners and young people.

**Background**

Over the past two decades, the youth mental health field has advanced considerably, but research on this topic remains underdeveloped and underfunded (Mei et al., 2019), and the field is highly siloed and fragmented. Jigsaw can contribute to improving outcomes for young people by producing additional innovative research and increasing its level of collaboration with academic partners, early career researchers and young people. Nurturing early career researchers also increases the focus on youth mental health and the production of evidence for use in policy and practice.

To guide Jigsaw's research programme over the next four years, three research areas and sample topics have been identified. These were developed based on consultations with key stakeholders and reflect research priorities set by the International Association of Youth Mental Health Research Network (Mei et al., 2019). It is anticipated that a variety of research methodologies will be employed within each area, as appropriate.

**1. Youth mental health needs**

- Insights from My World Survey 2

- Understanding seldom heard groups

- Evidence from engagement with Jigsaw services

**2. Mental health literacy**

- Education settings - students, parents, teaching staff

- Community settings

**3. Innovations in youth mental health care**

- Integrated youth mental health service models

- Digital mental health interventions

- Insights from clinical practice

- Economic benefits of primary care in youth mental health

## Objective one

**Conduct innovative research with academic partners, to build a more comprehensive understanding of youth mental health, mental health literacy and effective early intervention supports.**

### Actions

**a.** Establish and maintain partnerships with academic researchers, which are aligned to Jigsaw's research areas.

**b.** Build research capacity in individuals, including Jigsaw staff, wishing to pursue a career in youth mental health through partnerships and funding.

**c.** Expand on Jigsaw's Memorandum of Agreement with the School of Psychology, UCD, with a view to collaboratively developing a National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health Research by 2023.

## Objective two

**Increase young people's involvement in Jigsaw's research, so that it is relevant, engaging and achieves maximum impact.**

### Actions

**a.** Convene a Youth Research Council (YRC) to provide strategic advice and support to researchers in Jigsaw.

**b.** Develop capacity in youth researchers, with a view to developing a core group of peer researchers in Jigsaw.

# Priority 2: Robust evaluation

Robust evaluation outlines how Jigsaw will further enhance its evaluation framework and systems, and improve data quality.

## Background

Evaluation is critical in building a strong evidence base for youth mental health and Jigsaw has established very competent systems for assessing performance in many areas of our work. However, there is potential to advance Jigsaw's overall evaluation framework and data management systems, and to more deeply interrogate the wealth of information and evidence gathered. Enhancing these aspects of our work will ultimately facilitate a deeper understanding of service provision for young people.

## Objective one

**Expand Jigsaw's overall evaluation framework, to facilitate systematic data collection and more efficient assessment of progress and impact over time.**

### Actions

**a.** Refine the evaluation framework for Jigsaw's face-to-face mental health services.

**b.** Develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation framework for Jigsaw online.

**c.** Develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation framework encompassing Jigsaw's youth mental health promotion activities, including the One Good School™ initiative.

## Objective two

**Enrich data management across Jigsaw services, enabling Jigsaw to capture data more effectively.**

### Actions

**a.** Develop a long-term strategy to guide data management across Jigsaw in partnership with key stakeholders, including an IT specialist.

**b.** Continue to improve Jigsaw's data management system to facilitate effective and efficient data collection.

## Objective three

**Monitor the quality of data gathered in Jigsaw to better inform service delivery and garner deeper insights into youth mental health.**

### Actions

**a.** Enhance the monitoring and report functions within Jigsaw's data management system.

**b.** Refine and implement systematic structures to facilitate better compliance with data entry and monitoring.

# Priority 3: Transformative evidence

Transformative evidence describes how Jigsaw will creatively use the evidence it generates to reach young people and those around them, and better inform policy and practice in the area of youth mental health.

## Background

Although good quality evidence has the potential to be used in a way that impacts positively on young people's mental health, it is often not shared in a timely manner, in an appropriate format, to the right audience(s), or subsequently used to inform policy and practice. There is an opportunity for Jigsaw to improve the quality, quantity and impact of evidence it generates for key stakeholders on youth mental health. Here, key stakeholders are defined as young people, their families and other adults supporting young people (schools, third-level institutions, sports clubs and other voluntary settings); the research community; policymakers, and; practitioners. It is particularly important that the evidence Jigsaw generates is accessible to nonresearch audiences, which can be achieved using creative tools like social media posts, blogs, podcasts, infographics, and media interviews.

## Objective one

**Promote engagement with evidence produced by Jigsaw, ensuring it is accessible and appealing for members of the public.**

### Actions

a. Disseminate evidence generated by Jigsaw in inventive and creative ways for young people and those around them.

## Objective two

**Position Jigsaw as a trusted and primary source of evidence in the area of youth mental health by boosting its academic output and presence.**

### Actions

a. Add to the evidence-base for youth mental health by increasing the rate and quality of scholarly outputs.

b. Host an annual national research meeting to facilitate knowledge exchange in the area of youth mental health.

## Objective three

**Enhance the translation of evidence into policy and practice in the area of youth mental health by engaging policymakers and practitioners.**

### Actions

a. Provide input into a series of public policy reports in areas of specific relevance to young people's mental health over the course of the lifetime of this strategy.

b. Provide practitioners interested in youth mental health with resources to support evidence-informed practice .

# Next steps

The priorities identified here will guide Jigsaw's work in the area of research and evaluation over the next four years.

Once this strategy is launched, the next steps will be to:

- **Develop an implementation plan and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).**

- **Agree targets for each of the components of the plan.**

- **Cost this plan and seek funding.**

Throughout implementation of this strategy, we will maintain focus on our overall strategic plan, ensuring that this strategy continues to meet our needs, enables us to respond to the external environment, and is updated as appropriate.

# References

Dooley, B., O'Connor, C., Fitzgerald, A., & O'Reilly, A. (2019). My World Survey 2. Dublin: Jigsaw & UCD School of Psychology.

Mei, C., Fitzsimons, J., Allen, N., Alvarez-Jiminez, M., Amminger, P., Browne, V.... & McGorry, P. (2019). Global research priorities for youth mental health. Unpublished Manuscript.

# Appendix A: Development of strategy

The development of this strategy comprised of three stages: consultation (June-Sept 2019), development (Oct-Dec 2019) and implementation (Jan 2020-Dec 2023).

This work was led by Jigsaw's Research Manager, supported by members of the research and evaluation team. In addition, to guide the development of the new strategy, a working group was convened in Jigsaw comprising of staff, youth advisory panel members, board members and key external stakeholders.

Phase 1 consisted of consultations with the key national and international external stakeholders.

As part of Phase 1, a desk-based exercise was also conducted, where numerous existing national and international research strategies were reviewed and analysed critically.

Phase 2 involved reviewing and thematically analysing data gathered via consultations, and the production and launch of this strategy.

Implementation of the strategy (Phase 3) will continue between 2020 and 2023, and will be reviewed in line with the development of a new organisational plan for Jigsaw, which will be launched 2021.

***Diagram:*** *Key national and international stakeholders*

**Jigsaw**

- Staff (SMT, n=113 staff. 75% response rate, research team)

- Youth advisory panel (n=10)

- Board of directors (n=8)

**National stakeholders**

- Current academic partners (UCD School of Psychology, DCU; n=4)

- YOULEAD Doctoral Leadership Programme Members (NUIG, UCD; n=3)

- Early career/student researchers (UCD; n=2)

- Staff/researchers in other organisations (Focus Ireland, Alzheimer's Ireland, Pobal; n=3)

**International stakeholders**

- Orygen, Australia (n=4)

- Headspace, Australia (n=2)

- Foundry, Canada (n=1)

- YouthCan Impact, Canada (n=1)

We believe in an Ireland where every young person's mental health
is valued and supported.

**For information and support go to jigsawonline.ie**

## JIGSAW
Young people's
health in mind          **jigsaw.ie**