



**Opening Statement from Irish Council for Psychotherapy to Oireachtas Committee
on Health regarding Standards for Education and Training of Psychotherapists.**

Wednesday 26th November 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today. I'm Rúaidhrí O'Connor, CEO of the Irish Council for Psychotherapy (ICP), and I'm joined by Board Member, Dr. John O'Connor, who is available to talk about psychotherapy as a distinct independent profession.

[ABOUT ICP]

The **Irish Council for Psychotherapy** (ICP) represents 2,100 accredited psychotherapists across ten professional bodies. The ICP acts as the National Accrediting Organisation for the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP). While we support and have long pushed for state regulation of the profession, we must express our urgent concern that the current framework proposed by CORU would undermine the very standards it purports to protect. Our concern is not with regulation itself, but with the quality and integrity of the proposed criteria. The vast majority of psychotherapists in Ireland are in private practice, and our demands will not put further pressure on public waiting lists for mental health services.

CORU has suggested that its standards are aligned with best international practice. However, we can see no evidence to support this position. The proposed criteria dilute the depth and breadth of training that has long defined psychotherapy in Ireland, standards developed by psychotherapy associations with over 40 years' experience. Should CORU's proposed standards be accepted, it will spell an end to the profession of psychotherapy in Ireland as we know it, damage Ireland's standing internationally and,

most importantly of all, place the public at great risk. Psychotherapy training is, of necessity, a substantial undertaking for trainees and for training programmes. Personal Therapy for trainees is essential as it mitigates the risk of therapists carrying their own unexamined biases and their own unresolved issues into work with deeply vulnerable people. Indeed, CORU's Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board prepared a comprehensive submission to the CORU Council strongly advocating for mandatory personal therapy to be included. One of the Board's reasons was "to work on oneself in the context of the service being provided to a service user and with their care and safety in mind". This proposal from the Board was declined by the Council on grounds including the potential impact on other professions and possible emotional distress for students. We cannot accept these as valid grounds.

The standards as set out do not reflect the nature of the discipline of psychotherapy as it is practiced in Ireland, Europe, and worldwide. We would like to highlight the following:

1. **Inadequate Consultation:** CORU have said on many occasions that they consulted widely and developed their regulations in light of this. However, there is little evidence that our responses given during this process are reflected in CORU's proposed standards of proficiency. For example, a recent FOI request demonstrates that substantial numbers of submissions advocated for personal therapy for trainees and for close clinical supervision in training. We had expected that CORU would closely engage with our profession, prior to the wider public consultation.
2. **Misalignment with European Standards:** The European Association for Psychotherapy standards, which have developed over three decades, are currently the standard in Ireland and Europe for years. CORU's proposed standards do not attend to these and are placed substantially below this level, leaving Ireland as the outlier. European countries that have statutory regulation that mandate for personal therapy include Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Finland, Sweden, and Malta. If implemented as proposed, Ireland will have the lowest standards in Europe and Irish psychotherapists will be unable to work in other European countries without significant further training.

- 3. Inadequate Understanding of Psychotherapy as a Profession:** CORU's framework conflates psychotherapy with time-limited forms of intervention, particularly those provided by clinical and counselling psychologists, despite the professions having distinct scopes of practice, training pathways, and theoretical foundations.

Psychotherapy is founded on a model of training requiring intensive personal therapy, clinical supervision, and involving four years minimum training. In not specifying any of these details as necessary to training, the regulations entirely miss the point of what psychotherapy offers and what underpins it. It would mean that education providers could argue, and with justification from CORU – that they could provide a programme without these vital and essential components. Most importantly, this would mean that public safety would not be considered and protected.

We call on the Minister to pause and revisit standards, in order to address risks of substandard trainings, which will not prepare trainees for the complex work that is involved in this practice and will not provide the level of knowledge and skill required by members of the public. We call for a full revisiting of the regulation of the profession, involving a genuine, collaborative and open consultation with the profession as it aligns to best practice standards in Europe and beyond. We propose the establishment of a joint working group—comprising CORU, ICP, IACP, academic institutions, and service users—to co-develop standards that reflect both public protection and the unique nature of psychotherapy.

In closing, we reiterate our commitment to public safety, high standards, and professional accountability. Regulation must be fit for purpose. It must be informed by those who know the work, who do the work, and who have dedicated their lives to ensuring that psychotherapy in Ireland remains a rigorous, ethical, and healing profession. The current proposed standards are a backwards step which lower our current safe standards of training. We welcome this opportunity to address you, and we are happy to answer any questions you have for us.