

# National Forensic Mental Health Service Newsletter

Summer 2025



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## Note from the Editor

Welcome to the Summer 2025 edition of the NFMHS Newsletter.

It's been a busy couple of months in NFMHS. I hope those who can, are looking forward to a Summer break, or chance to unwind and relax in the warmer weather.

Once it is ready for regular use, our new restored walled garden will be the perfect spot to take a stroll and disconnect in the wonderful natural elements around us here in Portrane.

Have a great Summer, and happy reading!

*Simon Bergin*

Editor & Communications Officer



Get in touch at

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## Update from the Head of Service

Welcome to the summer 2025 edition of the National Forensic Mental Health Service (NFMHS) newsletter. This edition aims to provide an overview of activities within the NFMHS over the past number of months and some of our key development plans for the remainder of 2025.

Many thanks to Simon and all the contributors for collating this information together so that patients, staff and carers are always kept informed of relevant updates.

### Official Opening of the NFMHS Walled Garden

We had a wonderful sunny day for the official opening of the NFMHS Walled Garden & orchard in May 2025. Benefactors and supporters of the Walled Garden project joined NFMHS Staff and patients in celebration of this occasion. I would like to congratulate our Walled Garden team for bringing the project to this stage. The Walled Garden team will now move onto the next stage of the project in getting the garden ready for regular use by patients and staff.

### NFMHS Collaboration

Also in May 2025, the NFMHS demonstrated our commitment to continued collaborative working by hosting a meeting with the HSE CEO Bernard Gloster, Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll Mac Neill TD, Minister for Mental Health Mary Butler TD, Minister for Justice Jim O'Callaghan TD and representatives from the Irish Prison Service, Dept. of Health, Dept. of Justice and Health Service Executive.

In May the Area Management Team were also glad to host an engagement meeting with the Chief Executive of the Mental Health Commission, John Farrelly.

### NFMHS Developments

The NFMHS Patient Media Consumption Working Group had their first meeting in June 2025. The first action agreed at this meeting was to review the television channels with the service provider, and following on from this patients will be asked to complete a survey with details of their channel preferences so a customised list of channels can be provided.

Another important development is the setting up of the NFMHS Events Committee. The events committee will explore the feasibility of setting up events such as the NFMHS Garden Party and festivities in December, and support and coordinate the planning of same. More details to follow.



## Update from the Head of Service

### Mental Health Commission

I wrote to patients, staff and carers in June in relation to the Mental Health Commission Annual Inspection report for the Central Mental Hospital for 2024. The Mental Health Commission carried out a focused inspection on seclusion practices in the Central Mental Hospital on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2025, and we await the inspection report. At the time of writing the 2025 Annual Inspection has not yet taken place.

My experience over the past weeks has been of staff very much engaged in preparing for the inspection, and a notable sense of positive momentum in working together across the Hospital to make meaningful gains towards our shared goal of substantial improved compliance in 2025. I want to express my thanks and appreciation to every staff member who has taken part in inspection preparation on their ward, attended meetings, conducted audits, and took action to help this service in its efforts to get ready – and maintain a level of readiness – for the unannounced annual inspection.

While we have been of necessity engaged with inspection preparations, in the medium to longer term our ambition is to continue to grow and nurture a culture of quality and safety in the service.

This achieves not only a high level of compliance with minimum standards, but pushes forward in a drive for continuous improvement and better outcomes for our patients through recovery-focused care, in a service environment which supports quality care and protects the dignity, health and welfare of residents and patients, family and carers, and our staff. This is not the work of any one person, team or area, and is not for others to do.

The opportunity is here and now, and it is this; to do work that matters, in such a way that we bring out the best in each other, so that the service delivered is ultimately greater than the sum of its individual parts because it harnesses expertise, talents, skills, resources, supports and perspectives in the round.

As we reflect on the importance and positive impact of teamwork not only in our ambition for this service, but in the quality of our day to day working in often challenging and complex circumstances, may I take this moment to acknowledge that we sadly we experienced loss again this year with the bereavement of a much valued work colleague. Our thoughts and prayers go to family members, friends and colleagues as they process and deal with this huge loss.

### Thank You

Finally, I want to convey on behalf of the Area Management Team, our huge thanks and appreciation to every staff member for their contribution to the care delivered to our patients, and it is our hope that all colleagues and supporters of the service will have the opportunity to rest and recharge over the course of the summer period.

With best wishes,

Pauline Ackermann, Head of Service



# NFMHS

## NEWS

### Official Opening of the NFMHS Walled Garden



On Tuesday 20th May 2025, we officially opened the restored Victorian Walled Garden and orchard. The walled garden will be a therapeutic space for NFMHS patients to develop important social and horticultural skills as part of their recovery.

We would like to say a big thank you to the Walled Garden Project Team and patients for bringing this wonderful project to life!

We would also like to thank those who attended the official opening which included benefactors from the Brigidine Community and Supporters of the Walled Garden Project; Dervila Eyres, IHA Manager, Dublin North East; Brian Higgins, National Director for Adult Mental Health Services; the NFMHS AMT; Patients; Staff and former staff members.

# NFMHS

## NEWS

### **HSE CEO & Ministers visit NFMHS**



On Wednesday 28 May 2025, NFMHS was pleased to welcome the HSE CEO Bernard Gloster, Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll Mac Neill TD, Minister for Mental Health Mary Butler TD, Minister for Justice Jim O'Callaghan TD and representatives from the Irish Prison Service, Dept. of Health, Dept. of Justice and Health Service Executive.

We would like to thank everyone involved in planning for the day, and to those who accompanied our guests throughout the afternoon.



# NFMHS

## NEWS

### The Positive Effects of Art in Healthcare Architecture



Artist Claire McCluskey's 'Scaffold' at the National Forensic Mental Health Service, Portrane, Dublin

Kevin Bates, Healthcare, Science & Education Director at Scott Tallon Walker Architects (architects who designed NFMHS) published an article on LinkedIn which talks about the inspiration for the 'Scaffold' art piece by artist Claire McCluskey in the Central Mental Hospital, NFMHS lobby.

Initiated by Percent for Art and the National College of Art & Design and procured by the HSE and Central Mental Hospital, the piece was inspired by the known wall around the original site of the Central Mental Hospital in Dundrum, before its relocation to Portrane. 'Scaffold' is composed of textiles printed with scanned paintings created by the artist using ink and salt sublimated and crystalised.

The artist describes the thinking behind the piece as follows:

"As humans, we each have a boundary that helps us to define our sense of self, and mediate our connection with others. Like how the coastline meets the sea, this boundary is a negotiation that flows to and fro, between our interior self and external communities. Unfortunately, mental illness can directly impact this boundary and negatively affect our ability to safely interact with and navigate through the world around us. The role of the CMH is to provide a scaffold, a proxy boundary, to protect and support those who are most vulnerable, and in profound need of help in this way. (In this piece) the formal structure contrasts with the fluid imagery, referencing the balance between the supportive scaffold and the unique, vibrant expression of the individual."

# Wellness Workshop

12th of June 2025

By: Shauna Burke CPC



On the 12th of June, Shauna Burke, Clinical Placement Coordinator, facilitated a Wellness Workshop for 16 student nurses from the National Forensic Mental Health Service (NFMHS), including both internship mental health students and third-year students. The workshop was part of the students NMBI requirement for structured reflective practice (NMBI, 2024). The workshop was delivered with the support of the Suicide or Survive (SOS) organisation, whose expertise helped create a safe and engaging space for students to reflect, learn, and connect.

This quality initiative aligns with Strategic Goal 2, Action 2.3.3 of Connecting for Life, Ireland's national strategy to reduce suicide. The workshop was delivered to the highest standards of practice and service delivery and is supported by an evaluation framework in line with Connecting for Life requirements.

Participants received a Wellness Workbook designed to help them promote and maintain daily wellness practices. The session focused on promoting self-care, resilience, and support — all essential for both personal well-being and professional growth in mental health nursing.

Feedback on the day was overwhelmingly positive. One third-year student shared:

"I now have more resources at my disposal not only for myself but also to support people experiencing mental health difficulties."

Another participant reflected:

"It was great to hear other people's experiences — it makes you think a lot more. Brain was very inspirational."

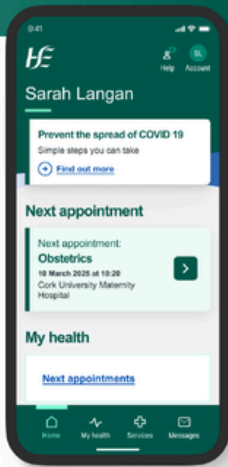
This wellness workshop demonstrates the commitment of the NFMHS is to looking after the well-being of future nurses—giving them practical tools to manage everyday challenges and helping them build confidence, empathy, and a strong sense of support. Thus, empowering future nurses and providing them with tools to help them navigate the demands of clinical settings while fostering compassion and recovery-focused care





# NFMHS

## HSE UPDATES



**Introducing the HSE Health App**

One of the key initiatives under the Digital for Care Framework is the delivery of the HSE Health App

- The HSE Health App is a new digital health service from the HSE that will give our patients secure access to some of their health information, hospital appointments, medical cards, and more
- In time, the HSE Health App will be the digital front door to the health service, and many of the HSE's new patient-facing digital health services will be accessible through the app

The HSE recently launched the Health App in February 2025. This is a major milestone in our Digital for Care plan for 2025. The App is now available through the App Store and Play Store.

Staff are encouraged to download the HSE Health App and give feedback and suggestions so we can continuously improve the app and ensure it realises its full potential to improve the patient and public experience of our services.

You can find more information and download the app from [www.hse.ie/health-app](http://www.hse.ie/health-app)



HSE Health and Wellbeing, in partnership with HSE Psychology, have developed Balancing Stress, a new online stress management programme for the general public. This programme, which consists of six sessions, aims to support individuals in managing stress effectively and in enhancing their mental wellbeing.

Topics covered in the programme include Understanding stress; Managing worry; Managing anxiety; Managing low mood and depression; Stress and its impact on relationships.

Click [here](#) for more information.

# NFMHS

## MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION

### What the MHC Do?

The MHC regulates in-patient mental health services; protecting the interests of people who are involuntarily admitted; and setting standards for high quality and good practices across mental health services.

Every year, the MHC is required to inspect and regulate all approved centres across the country. There are many different types of approved centre providing a range of mental health services.

### Judgement Support Framework

The Framework provides detailed guidance to assist approved centres to comply with regulatory requirements and to improve the quality of services provided to residents. For each regulation, the Framework sets out the purpose of the regulation; the processes and training that should be in place to support the regulation; the monitoring requirements to ensure the regulation is being implemented appropriately; and the type of evidence that should be available to the Inspector of Mental Health Services.

### MHC publishes new Tribunals Explained video series

The Mental Health Commission has developed a Tribunals Explained video series, as an additional information resource, for service users, their loved ones and the general public on the Tribunals process.

There are nine videos in the series which cover topics that are also included in the **Know Your Rights** booklet.

### MHC Annual Report 2024

The Mental Health Commission has published its 2024 Annual Report which sets out its work to promote, encourage and foster the establishment and maintenance of high standards and good practices in the delivery of mental health services.

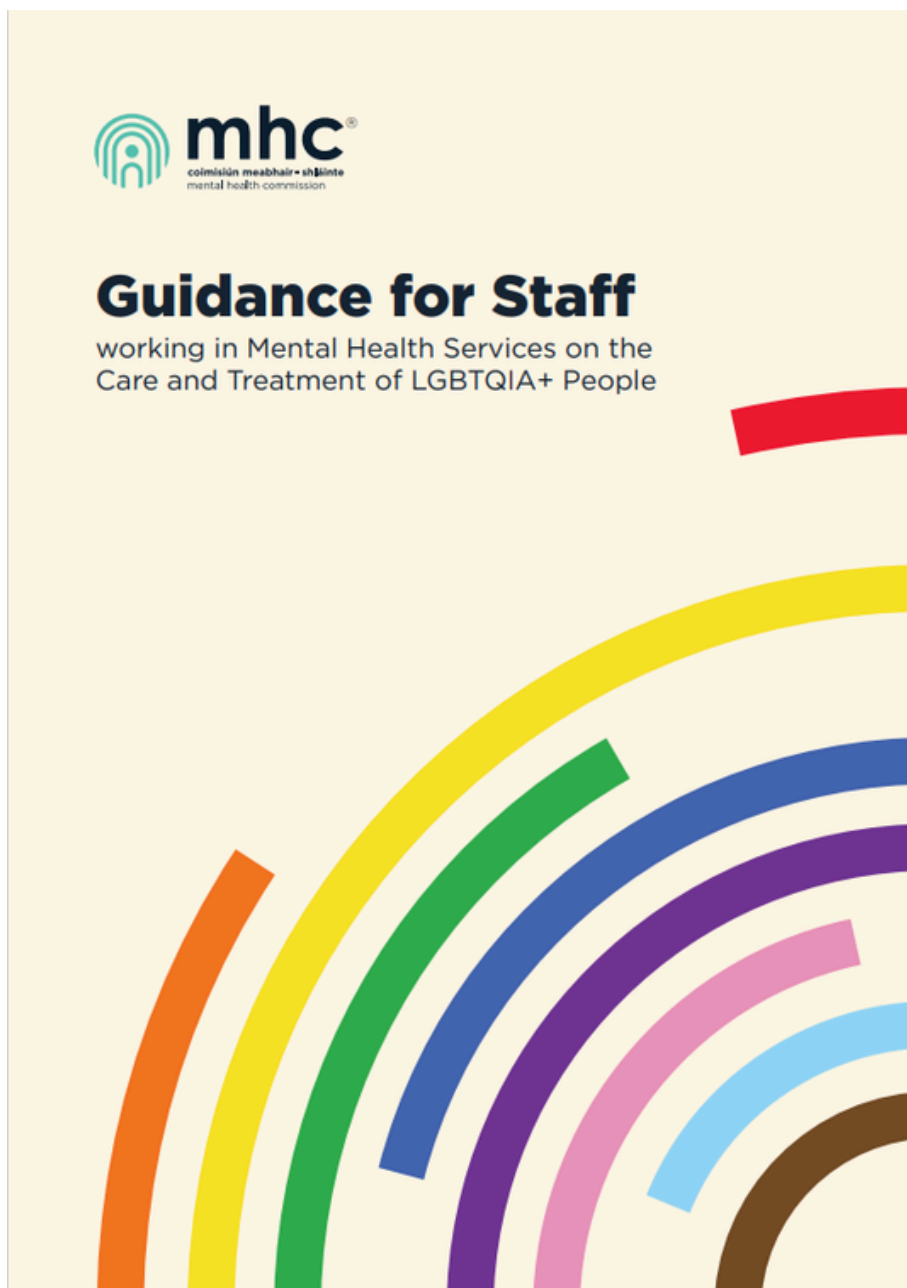
The report details how the organisation's programmes of registration, inspection, monitoring and enforcement continued to improve inpatient mental health standards by holding providers to account.

For more information go to <https://www.mhcirl.ie/>



# NFMHS

## MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION



The Mental Health Commission has published a guidance document “Guidance for Staff working in Mental Health Services on the Care and Treatment of LGBTQIA+ People” available to download [here](#)

The accompanying 30-minute learning module, entitled “Practical guidance for LGBTQIA+ mental health care” is also now live on HSEland.

# NFMHS

## PARTNER SERVICES

### Update from the Evolve Recovery College



At Evolve Recovery College, we offer a range of mental health courses that support individuals developing the tools to enhance their mental health and well-being. These courses focus on self-awareness, resilience, coping strategies, and personal growth. Our approach encourages experiential learning, where individuals learn through practical activities, group discussions, and shared experiences.

We embrace a strength-based and adult educational approach, where learning is based on personal experiences, shared knowledge, and mutual support. Our courses are designed to be engaging, practical, and empowering, allowing participants to take an active role in their recovery journey.

We strongly believe in co-production, which means our courses are developed with and for the people who use them. We welcome engagement from everyone—service users, carers, and staff. Your voice, experience, and insights are valued in shaping our Recovery Education programmes.

Would you like to get involved? We welcome participation from all! Whether you are looking to learn, share, or contribute to the development of new courses, there is a place for you at Evolve Recovery College. Join us in creating a learning community that supports recovery, empowerment, and positive change.

For more information, reach out to us we would love to hear from you!

Elaine -

[elaine.okeeffe@mentalhealthireland.ie](mailto:elaine.okeeffe@mentalhealthireland.ie)

Alex - [alexandras@mentalhealthireland.ie](mailto:alexandras@mentalhealthireland.ie)

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## Update from the Evolve Recovery College

### **Mental Health Education Opportunities – 24th February**

On the 24th of February, we came together for an inspiring discussion on mental health education opportunities. It was a productive session where a range of exciting course ideas were explored, all with a strong focus on inclusive education, meaningful learning experiences, and a service-user-led approach.

A big thank you to all who participated and shared their ideas! We at Evolve are looking forward to continuing these important conversations and turning ideas into action.

Evolve Recovery College is a unique learning space that offers mental health recovery education for everyone. Our goal is to provide opportunities for individuals to explore their strengths, develop knowledge and skills, and build confidence in a safe and supportive environment.

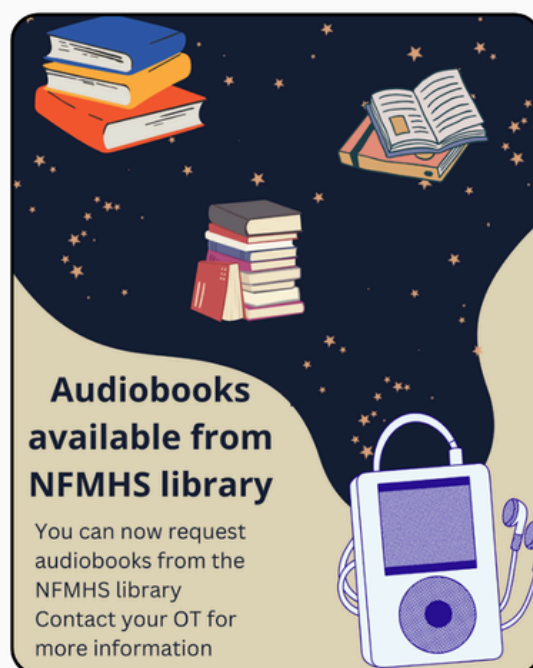
### **St. Patrick's day celebration**

We had an incredible St. Patrick's Day celebration at NFMHS in collaboration with Evolve Recovery College and the talented music band, Rhythm! The event was filled with joy, music, and community spirit.

Guests enjoyed delicious pastries and coffee from our catering department, while engaging in a game of the popular Irish Carpet Bowls. The lively beats of Rhythm set the perfect atmosphere, encouraging everyone to get up and dance. The energy in the room was infectious, bringing people together to celebrate Irish culture in the best way possible—through music, movement, and connection.

A huge thank you to everyone who participated, contributed, and made this event so special. Your enthusiasm and spirit truly made it a celebration to remember. Looking forward to more uplifting events in the future! 🍀🎵💚

## Audiobooks now available from the NFMHS library.

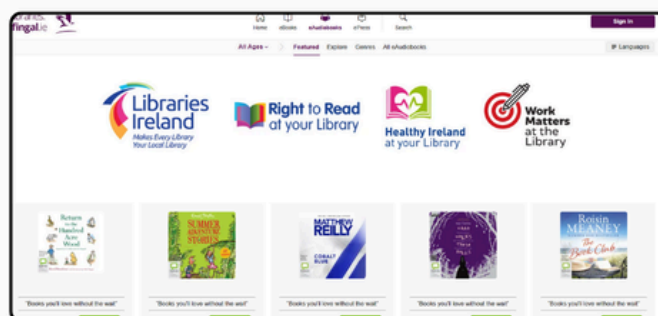


### Audiobook Browsing Guide

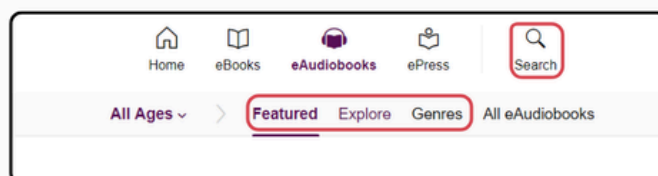
1. Type the following into the internet browser's search bar and press search or enter.

<https://fingal.borrowbox.com/audiobooks>

2. You will be brought to the following website, you do not need to sign in to browse.



3. Click 'Featured', 'Explore' or 'Genres' to browse or click 'Search' to look for a specific book.



4. Find an audiobook of interest and write down the title and author.  
Some books are available immediately and others need to be reserved.

5. Complete the audiobook request form found in the village centre library and give it to your OT.

# NFMHS

## STAFF NEWS

### Reminder of Staff Supports

#### Dignity At Work Support Contact Details

(Contact hours - Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm)

Jim Tighe

Phone: 01-7787164 or ext. 87164

Email: [james.tighe@hse.ie](mailto:james.tighe@hse.ie)

Helena Reffell

Phone: 01 778 6723 or ext. 86723

Email: [helena.reffell@hse.ie](mailto:helena.reffell@hse.ie)

Hazel Blackwood

Phone: 01 778 6957 or ext. 86957

Email: [Hazel.Blackwood@hse.ie](mailto:Hazel.Blackwood@hse.ie)

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### Employee Assistance Programme

#### **EAPandME** Employee Assistance Programme

Many of us experience stresses and strains in our work and personal lives and might be wondering if there is anyone there to help.

Call **0818 327 327**  
to speak to someone who can help.



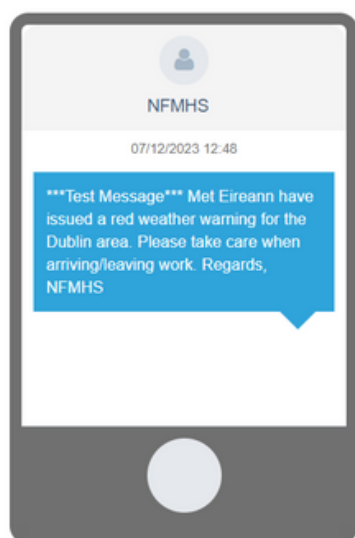
 **#EAPandME**





# NFMHS

## STAFF NEWS



The text messaging service **Sendmode** has been in operation in NFMHS since February 2024.

The service provides short SMS alerts sent directly to a staff member's designated mobile phone and is used exclusively by the Head of Service office to communicate important updates relating to the service, and weather/traffic and/or local news which may impact you.

240 staff members have so far signed up to the service and received alerts regarding **local road closures and delays, Employee Financial Wellness seminars, the Quality Network and NFMHS Town Hall meetings.**

If you wish to avail of the service please email [comms.nfmhs@hse.ie](mailto:comms.nfmhs@hse.ie) and include your mobile number to be included in the database.

Please indicate whether the mobile number is your personal number or work number.

We hope to use the Sendmode system to reach all our staff members!

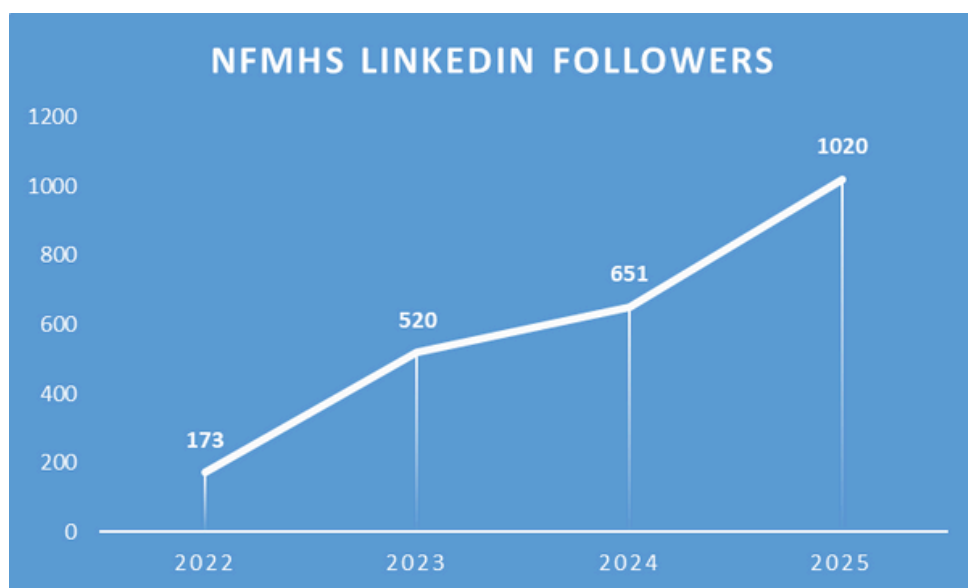
**SIGN UP TODAY**



# NFMHS

## SOCIAL MEDIA

### NFMHS LinkedIn

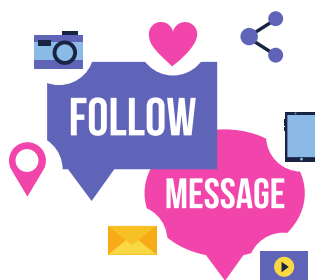


The NFMHS LinkedIn account is used as a communications and recruitment tool. The account now has over 1000 followers, and has grown significantly over the past 3 years.



NFMHS also has a website and social media account on X (Twitter)?

Follow the accounts at the handles below



**[hse.ie/nfmhs](https://hse.ie/nfmhs)**



**NFMHS Ireland**



**@NFMHSIreland**



**CONTACT US**

## **NFMHS Comms**

Thank you to all our contributors to the NFMHS Summer Newsletter 2025.

If anyone would like to pass on a story or highlight the work of one of your colleagues, please send it to [comms.nfmhs@hse.ie](mailto:comms.nfmhs@hse.ie) for consideration in the next newsletter.

Please get in touch if you would like to highlight an initiative taking place in your department.

We also welcome any feedback on the NFMHS newsletter. Please let us know at [comms.nfmhs@hse.ie](mailto:comms.nfmhs@hse.ie)

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