



**BUDGET 2026**

## **Coolmine Therapeutic Community Pre Budget Submission**

**Now is the time to invest in recovery.**

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# Executive Summary

**Ireland continues to face one of the highest rates of substance misuse in Europe, with alcohol and drug-related harms impacting individuals, families, and communities across the country. Demand for addiction treatment services is increasing, driven by rising awareness, growing complexity of cases, and greater willingness to seek support.**

Coolmine Therapeutic Community (Coolmine) believes recovery is not just about stopping substance use—it is about achieving meaningful, long-term change in physical, emotional, and mental health. Since 1973, Coolmine has remained committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to overcome addiction and live a purposeful, fulfilling life. Our model is based on the principle of sustained recovery, underpinned by a full continuum of care that meets people where they are and supports them through each phase of their recovery journey.

This continuum spans from early intervention and outreach, through to structured day and residential programmes, and

into aftercare and reintegration. Coolmine's phased and person-centred approach is particularly vital for individuals with high-complexity needs, such as homelessness, co-occurring mental health conditions, and involvement with the criminal justice system. For treatment to be effective, services must be appropriately located, resourced, and responsive to need at each stage of recovery.

In 2024, the final report of the Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use was published, representing a landmark moment in Ireland's approach to drug policy. The Assembly's 36 recommendations send a strong signal for change—calling for a more ambitious, coordinated, and adequately funded system of prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery. Crucially, it recognises the need to properly resource community and voluntary sector services and better integrate drugs policy with broader health and social policy frameworks.

In response, Coolmine is seeking critical investment in Budget 2026 to meet growing demand, address structural funding challenges, and ensure quality, sustainable service delivery to some of the most marginalised groups in Irish society.

## Coolmine's four key funding priorities are:

**01**

Capital Investment of €9 million to redevelop Coolmine Lodge, increasing residential treatment capacity for homeless men by 33%.

**02**

€560,000 investment to establish dedicated Aftercare and Recovery Service Centres of Excellence across three regions.

**03**

A Centralised, Sustainable Multi-Annual Funding Model to enable full cost recovery and support long-term planning and delivery.

**04**

Funding for Pay Parity to align Coolmine's staffing model with public sector pay rates and ensure retention of a skilled workforce.

These investments will strengthen our national treatment infrastructure, reduce long-term public spending, reintegrate individuals back into the community, and—most importantly—save lives. With the right resources, Coolmine can continue delivering high-impact, holistic health and recovery services that break the cycles of addiction, homelessness, and intergenerational disadvantage in Ireland.



## Background of Coolmine

**Coolmine is a national provider of drug and alcohol treatment services, supporting individuals and families impacted by substance misuse since 1973. Our vision is simple: that everyone in Ireland should have the opportunity to overcome addiction and live a fulfilling, independent life.**

We deliver a broad spectrum of evidence-informed, trauma-responsive services across residential and community settings, all designed to build long-term recovery and strengthen recovery capital. This means helping people to reduce or stop substance use, as well as rebuilding their physical health, mental wellbeing, family relationships, and social connections—laying the foundation for lasting reintegration into their communities.

In partnership with the HSE and other statutory, community, and voluntary stakeholders, Coolmine currently operates 15 core facilities and 22 satellite clinics across the East, Mid-West and South West regions of Ireland. Our footprint has grown steadily since 2021, when we expanded into the Mid-West and South West through the development of new community-based treatment services.

We support some of the most marginalised individuals in the country—people experiencing homelessness, those involved in the criminal justice system, members of the Traveller community, and individuals with co-occurring mental health conditions. Most have experienced significant trauma and adversity that contributed to their problematic substance use.

In 2024, Coolmine supported 3,293 people through a comprehensive range of services, including residential treatment, day programmes, outreach, harm reduction, medical support, housing and employment pathways, family services, and structured aftercare. These programmes are delivered within a model of care that places the individual at the centre and recognises recovery as a personalised, non-linear process.

Coolmine is primarily funded through a Service Level Agreement with the HSE under Section 39 of the Health Act 2004 (see appendix for a full breakdown of funders). However, growing demand, increasing complexity of need, and staff recruitment and retention challenges have placed pressure on the system, requiring a renewed investment in capacity, workforce sustainability, and infrastructure.

Our services are underpinned by a whole-person, outcomes-driven approach that delivers real, measurable change—improved physical and psychological wellbeing, stronger family bonds, safer communities, and greater economic participation. With sustained, multi-annual funding, Coolmine can continue to play a leading role in Ireland's response to substance use by supporting individuals to not only survive addiction, but to thrive beyond it.



# Demand for Services

The need for high-quality, accessible addiction treatment in Ireland is at an all-time high.

In 2024, the Health Research Board (HRB) recorded 13,294 drug treatment presentations, excluding alcohol—the highest to date. Cocaine remains the most reported drug at 39.8% of cases, with a 7.4% increase from 2023, while opioids accounted for 25%. This growing complexity in drug use highlights sustained pressure on addiction services nationwide.

At Coolmine, the impact of this demand is clearly visible. For men, particularly those experiencing homelessness, access to residential treatment is critically limited. Coolmine Lodge, our 30-bed men's residential service, currently has 93 men on a waiting list, with 67% requiring detoxification and many presenting with complex co-occurring mental health issues. Without sufficient detox and residential spaces, men are at increased risk of continued drug use, homelessness, and contact with the criminal justice system. Investment in Coolmine Lodge will directly increase access to care and improve outcomes for this underserved group.

At the same time, homelessness continues to drive service demand. As of April 2025, 15,418 adults and children were in emergency accommodation, including over 11,000 in Dublin. Coolmine's Private Emergency Accommodation Assertive Case-management Team (PACT), which supports people in emergency housing, saw a 23% increase in clients in 2024, with 358 people supported already this year.

Gender equity also remains a focus. More women than ever are accessing treatment at Coolmine, despite facing unique barriers such as domestic violence, childcare, and stigma.

Family supports, including our Parents Under Pressure (PuP) programme, are in high demand. Initially resourced to support 25 families per year, PuP supported 96 families in 14 months, with 37 more already in 2025. Similarly, child participation in residential treatment tripled between 2022 and 2023 and rose another 8% in 2024.

In all areas, Coolmine is responding to rising demand with targeted, effective services. With appropriate investment—particularly in Coolmine Lodge—we can expand our reach, address unmet needs, and continue to provide trauma-informed, family-inclusive, life-changing care.



## Our Impact

**3,293**

Treatment  
supports  
provided

**200**

Residential  
placements

**3,093**

Community supports provided

**52**

Children  
provided with  
residential  
supports

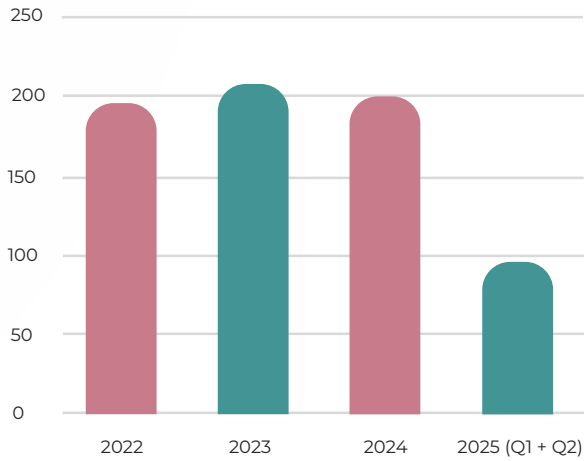
**326**

Family members  
supported

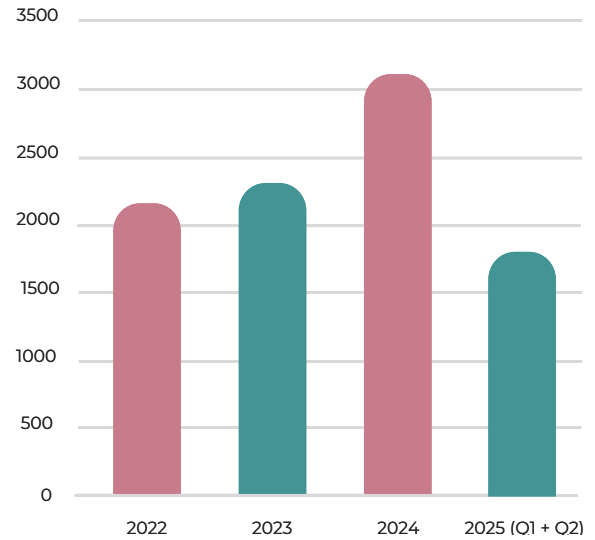
**43**

Graduates of a  
therapeutic  
community  
programme

### Residential Placements Year on Year



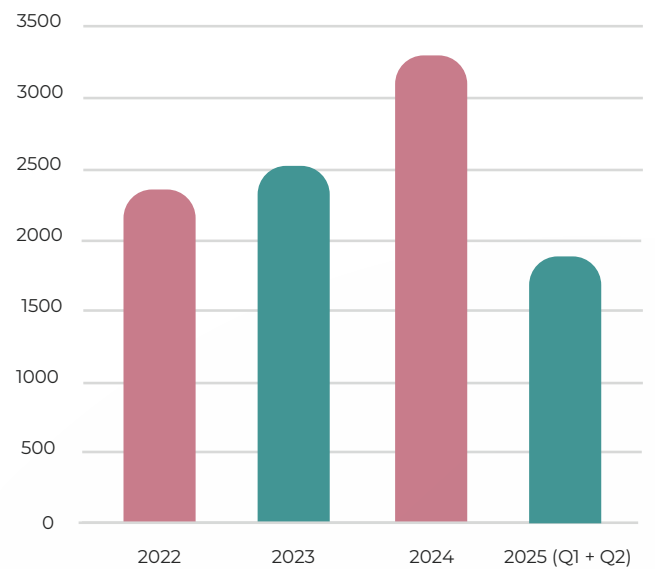
### Community Supports Year on Year



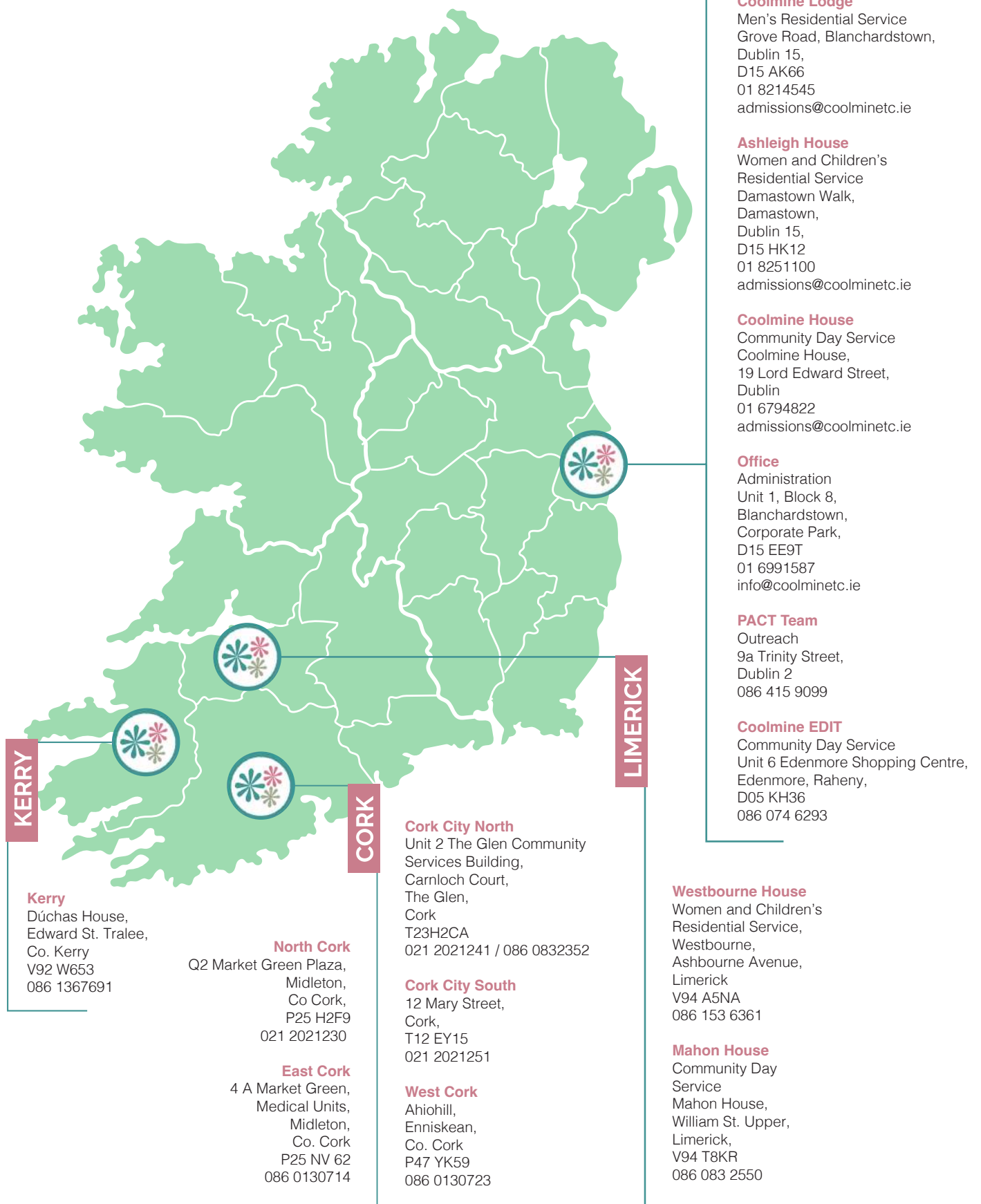
### Children Supported Year on Year



### Total Presentations Year on Year

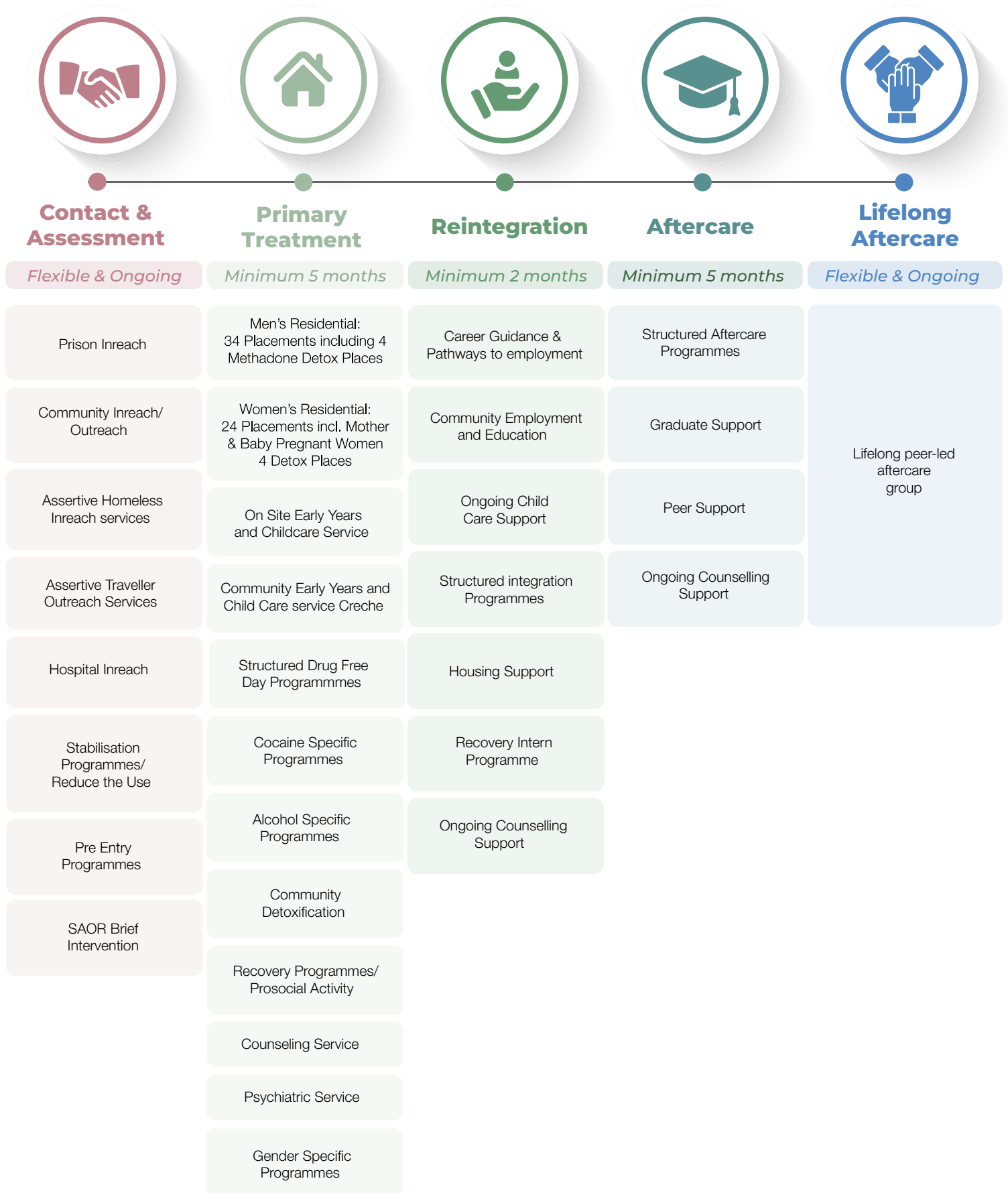


# Our Services





# Continuum of Care





# Action Plan

## Action 1

### €9m Investment to Redevelop Coolmine Lodge – Expanding Access to Residential Treatment for Homeless Men

Coolmine Lodge, operational since 1973, is Ireland's only long-term residential Therapeutic Community (TC) for men impacted by addiction. It has been a critical pillar in the national addiction infrastructure, particularly for men experiencing homelessness, criminal justice involvement, and co-occurring mental health issues. However, the facility's physical limitations—especially its dormitory-style layout—are no longer fit for purpose. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Coolmine was forced to reduce its admissions by 42% to comply with public health guidelines, exposing the structural unsuitability and risks associated with multi-occupancy rooms. Despite efforts to partially restore capacity to 30 placements, the pandemic underscored the urgent need for single-room occupancy (SRO) to safeguard client wellbeing and enhance infection control, dignity, and trauma-informed care.

Coolmine is now seeking a once-in-a-generation capital investment of €9 million to redevelop and modernise its Grove Road site. This redevelopment will increase residential placements from 110 to 150 annually—a 33% rise in capacity—and meet the complex needs of a growing population in addiction and homelessness.

#### The proposed redevelopment includes five interlinked elements:

1. **Conversion of Existing Facilities:** Refurbishment of the existing Lodge to provide four ensuite SROs, and upgrade of the 2002 building to include 10 ensuite SROs with accessibility improvements.
2. **New Accommodation Block:** A purpose-built block with 18 ensuite SROs (including two accessible units).
3. **8-Bed Detox Unit:** A standalone, single-storey detox facility to serve poly-drug users with complex needs, significantly expanding Coolmine's detox capacity.
4. **Multi-Purpose Building:** A 400m<sup>2</sup> building to deliver expanded aftercare, CE programme capacity (from 7 to 14 placements), and transitional recovery housing, especially for clients from outside Dublin.
5. **SRO Across All Units:** All rooms in the new and refurbished units will be single-occupancy ensuite rooms, promoting infection control, privacy, dignity, and improved recovery outcomes.

## Impact: Increased Access and Improved Recovery Outcomes

Coolmine Lodge currently supports 140 residential placements annually. As of July 2025, 93 men are on the waiting list, with 67% requiring detoxification and all presenting with mental health challenges of varying complexity. This redevelopment directly addresses unmet demand, bottlenecks, and service inefficiencies by:

- Increasing annual treatment placements by 33%
- Doubling detox capacity and widening eligibility beyond methadone thresholds
- Expanding aftercare supports and improving transition to independent living
- Enhancing retention and outcomes through dignified, trauma-informed accommodation

Over five years, 750 men will benefit from this capital investment—men who might otherwise remain trapped in cycles of addiction, homelessness, and incarceration.

## Alignment with National Strategy and Policy Commitments

This redevelopment is fully aligned with several Government priorities:

- **Housing for All:** Supports the transition away from dormitory accommodation and increases health-linked emergency housing for homeless men.
- **Sláintecare:** Delivers person-centred, integrated care in line with universal healthcare commitments.
- **National Drugs Strategy (2017–2025):** Expands detox and rehabilitation capacity and improves service access for those with high support needs.
- **Citizens' Assembly on Drug Use:** Advances the cross-departmental approach recommended by the Assembly to address addiction through evidence-based service expansion.
- **Programme for Government:** Advances commitments to increase drug-free hostels and improve treatment access for marginalised communities.

Coolmine submitted a Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) application for this project through Fingal County Council in 2023, but it was not approved. We are now calling on Government to support this essential redevelopment, which aligns with CAS guidelines and has no additional revenue cost to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), as all operational costs are already funded by the HSE and Coolmine.

This investment will increase treatment capacity, improve outcomes, and directly support national efforts to address addiction, homelessness, and health inequality. Coolmine Lodge must evolve to meet today's standards of care. This proposal offers a strategic, cost-effective, and scalable solution. This strategic redevelopment will increase residential treatment and recovery placements by 33%, directly addressing the unmet and growing need for accessible, high-quality addiction services for men experiencing homelessness.

### Proposal

**€9 million capital investment to redevelop Coolmine Lodge, creating a safe, trauma-informed, and future-proof residential recovery facility for homeless men.**



## Action 2

Recovery Capital investment €560k

Recovery Capital refers to the internal and external resources that individuals draw upon to initiate and sustain long-term recovery from addiction. These include personal strengths like physical and mental health, social supports such as family and peer relationships, and community assets like housing, employment, education, and access to services. This framework recognises that recovery is not solely about abstinence but about building a fulfilling life across multiple domains.

Research consistently shows that higher levels of recovery capital are strong predictors of sustained sobriety. Assessing and strengthening these resources allows for more effective, tailored interventions and reduces the risk of relapse. At Coolmine, this holistic approach has been embedded in our model for decades. We provide a continuum of care that addresses not only substance use, but also the underlying trauma, social isolation, and economic exclusion that can undermine recovery. Our services—from residential treatment to family support and career guidance—are designed to build meaningful and lasting recovery capital.

However, the period after exiting treatment is one of the most vulnerable stages of recovery. Without structured aftercare, the gains made during treatment can be lost.

That is why Coolmine is seeking an investment of €560,000 in Budget 2026 to establish Recovery Capital Centres of Excellence in Dublin, the Mid-West and South West. These centres will provide structured aftercare, peer support, recovery coaching, and community partnerships to strengthen recovery capital and reduce relapse risk, directly supporting the Citizens' Assembly's call for greater investment in post-treatment recovery infrastructure.

### Proposal

**Investment of €560k to provide designated Aftercare and recovery service centres of excellence across 3 regions.**



## Action 3

### A Centralised, Sustainable Multi-Annual Funding Model for Full-Cost Recovery

Coolmine is a national provider of community and residential addiction services, delivering life-changing supports to individuals and families across Ireland. We currently operate under four separate **HSE Service Arrangements across different CHO areas**. This fragmented structure creates unnecessary administrative complexity, limits consistency in service planning, and hinders operational efficiency.

We are calling for the introduction of a centralised, multi-annual funding agreement (3–5 years) between the HSE and Coolmine. This model will provide the stability and predictability needed to support longer-term planning, improve service delivery, and increase staff recruitment and retention—all of which are critical to delivering improved client outcomes.

In addition to a centralised approach, we are also seeking a full-cost-recovery funding model. Current annual and retrospective funding arrangements fail to account for the full operational costs required to run services effectively. A revised model must include provision for:

- Utilities, insurance, maintenance, ICT, and premises costs
- Pension contributions, in line with the mandatory auto-enrolment scheme introduced in January 2025
- Sustainable staffing levels, with alignment to public sector pay rates
- Governance, safeguarding, training, and quality assurance

This funding must also be responsive to Ireland's changing inflationary environment. Without inflation-adjusted allocations, the quality and sustainability of service delivery is compromised.

Predictable, multi-annual, full-cost-recovery funding is essential to secure and scale the delivery of services that build recovery capital, reduce relapse, and promote long-term, positive outcomes for individuals and families in recovery.

#### Proposal

#### A Centralised, Sustainable Multi-Annual Funding Model for Full-Cost Recovery





## Action 4

### Sustainable Service Delivery Through Alignment with Public Sector Pay Rates

The single greatest threat to the sustainability of addiction services in Ireland is the continued inability of the community and voluntary sector to recruit and retain skilled staff due to ongoing pay inequality. Community-based addiction services such as Coolmine are primarily funded through Section 39 arrangements of the Health Act 2004, which do not include automatic alignment with public sector pay agreements.

Despite delivering vital public services on behalf of the State, Coolmine and other voluntary organisations remain excluded from the terms and benefits available to their public sector counterparts. This two-tier pay system is having a detrimental impact. Recent figures show annual staff turnover rates ranging from 20% to 43% across the sector, severely affecting service continuity, clinical oversight, and client outcomes. In many cases, staff performing equivalent roles in HSE-funded organisations earn significantly more, with a pay gap of up to 17.5% remaining, even after the 2023 Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) agreement.

While Coolmine welcomed the first tranche of the 8% WRC pay agreement in 2024, which contributed to stabilising our turnover rate to 22% in Q1 2024, the absence of a clear timeline for the remaining payments—and uncertainty about whether this increase will be permanently embedded—creates operational insecurity. Even with full implementation of the WRC agreement, Coolmine staff will still lag behind by 17.5% compared to public sector equivalents, representing a gap of approximately €1.1 million annually.

As public sector bodies struggle with their own workforce gaps, they are increasingly recruiting directly from community organisations like Coolmine, exacerbating the staffing crisis in our sector. The result is service reductions and unmet demand at a time when the need for addiction support is growing.

The Wheel's 2023 report highlighted the critical need for funding reform across Section 39, 10, 56, and 40-funded bodies delivering essential public services, including addiction, health, homelessness, and family support. It found that these organisations face significant pay disparities compared to State employees, despite providing identical services, and called for immediate investment to correct this imbalance.

Coolmine is calling for the alignment of salaries with public sector pay rates to secure a sustainable future for addiction services. This includes:

- Full implementation of the WRC pay agreement and a clear payment timeline.
- Investment to close the remaining 17.5% pay gap, ensuring parity with equivalent public sector roles.
- A formal mechanism that ensures community and voluntary organisations are automatically included in future public sector pay negotiations and agreements.

Coolmine provides life-saving care to some of the most marginalised individuals and families in Ireland. We cannot continue to do this without the ability to attract and retain dedicated, qualified professionals. Without urgent action, the sector risks a staffing crisis that will jeopardise service delivery, continuity of care, and recovery outcomes.

#### Proposal

**Immediate investment to align Coolmine salaries with public sector rates, and a strategic process to ensure Section 39, 10, and 56 organisations are included in future public pay agreements.**

# Conclusion

Ireland continues to face an escalating crisis in addiction, mental health, and homelessness. At the heart of this crisis are individuals and families who deserve access to consistent, compassionate, and evidence-based services that not only address immediate substance use issues but foster long-term recovery, reintegration, and wellbeing. Coolmine's model of care delivers this—meeting people where they are, walking with them through every stage of recovery, and enabling them to rebuild their lives.

**This pre-budget submission outlines four strategic actions that, together, will safeguard and strengthen Coolmine's ability to meet rising national need:**

## Action 1

€9 million capital investment to redevelop Coolmine Lodge, creating a safe, trauma-informed, and future-proof residential recovery facility for homeless men. This strategic redevelopment will increase residential treatment and recovery placements by 33%, directly addressing the unmet and growing need for accessible, high-quality addiction services for men experiencing homelessness.

## Action 2

seeks targeted investment to establish Recovery Capital Centres of Excellence across three regions, delivering aftercare and peer-led community recovery supports in line with national recommendations.

## Action 3

urges the implementation of a centralised, sustainable multi-annual funding model, enabling long-term planning, service continuity, and financial efficiency.

## Action 4

demands urgent pay alignment for staff in community and voluntary services to resolve the deep and growing disparities that threaten workforce stability and service provision.

Each of these actions reflects a necessary, strategic investment—not only in infrastructure or staffing—but in people, families, and communities. Coolmine is uniquely placed, with decades of experience and a national footprint, to deliver results that reduce pressure on acute health, housing, and criminal justice systems while improving lives and reducing long-term public spending.

The recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Drugs have made clear the need for innovation, collaboration, and sustained resourcing of recovery pathways. This submission echoes that call. With the right investment in Budget 2026, Coolmine can continue to deliver the essential, transformative services that individuals, families, and the State depend upon.

# Now is the time to invest in recovery.

Further information and publications are available at [www.coolmine.ie](http://www.coolmine.ie)

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# Appendix

## Context – Current Income and Sources of Income

Coolmine's total income for 2024 was €10,468,745, representing a 16.5% increase compared to €8,983,607 in 2023. This growth reflects both the increasing demand for our services and the continued trust placed in us by our funding partners.

Our work would not be possible without the ongoing commitment and support of our principal funders.

**In 2024, the primary sources of income were as follows:**

- Health Service Executive (HSE): 75%
- Department of Justice and Equality via the Probation Service: 6.4%
- Department of Social Protection – Community Employment (CE) Scheme: 1.2%

### **Additional income was generated through:**

- Resident contributions (6%), typically redirected welfare payments during participation in residential programmes
- Unrestricted income, community fundraising, and donations (11.4%)

Coolmine deeply values the strong relationships it has built with its funders and stakeholders. The continued financial support, guidance, and collaboration from the HSE, the Probation Service, and others have been essential in enabling us to meet rising service demand while maintaining a high standard of care. We extend our sincere thanks to all those who contribute to the sustainability and growth of our mission to support individuals and families in recovery.

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“

*My life has changed completely. I have my children in my life. Coolmine equipped me with the knowledge and self-awareness and the ability to manage my emotions.*

”

## Paddy's Story

“Before I went to Coolmine my life from a very young age was one of unhappiness, drugs and prison.

“I was in prison in 2012 for the seventh or eighth time and my children had been placed in care due to my drug use. I was willing to try anything to fix myself and become a better father and person. I started linking in with a drugs counsellor in Limerick Prison and she suggested Coolmine Lodge to me.

“When I first came to Coolmine everyone was welcoming and the grounds of the place looked lovely, but I was unsure as to whether I had made the right decision by going in there. After about three or four weeks I started to settle in and started to feel good about myself so I thought right I'm going to get stuck in. I learned a lot in there mainly about myself and what kind of a person I am. My whole mindset has changed; how I view myself being the biggest change I would say.

“I have achieved so much in my recovery, but the fact that I managed to pull myself out of the absolute depths of despair and misery is without a doubt my biggest achievement. I've completed a Diploma in Addiction Studies and a Degree in Social Care. I also have run marathons and have done a good bit of fundraising for some local charities. I now have the ability to live right.

“Everything I have in my life now I never had, for the most part. I had three children who were in care before I went to Coolmine Lodge so I got them back, but everything else I newly gained or never had before Coolmine and I will be forever grateful to Coolmine for that.

“It's really hard to put it in words because one sentence or even a paragraph would not do it justice, but I would like people to know that recovery is a million percent possible.”