

The College of Psychiatry of Ireland Welcomes Commitment given to Mental Health by the New Government in its Ministerial Appointments and the Programme for Government.

The College of Psychiatry welcomes Dr James Reilly as the Minister for Health and Kathleen Lynch, Minister of State with responsibility for Mental Health. The College particularly welcomes the commitment to developing mental health services shown in the Programme for Government for National Recovery 2011 - 2016.

“The emphasis on reducing stigma, ensuring early and appropriate intervention and improving access to modern mental health services in the community is greatly welcomed” said Dr Anthony McCarthy, President of the College *“as is the commitment to implementing the recommendations of A Vision for Change, and ring fencing of €35 million for this purpose.”*

The College calls for the introduction of a National Mental Health Service Directorate, as recommended in *A Vision for Change*, which would have responsibility to coordinate and implement the recommendations, and ensure the effective use of the ring fenced €35 million.

“A greater national and cohesive focus on suicide prevention is urgently required” highlighted Dr McCarthy, *“and the College urges the new Government to act now on the commitment given in their programme to reduce Ireland’s current high levels of suicide devastating families and communities around the country.”*

Improvement in mental health care at primary care level is needed. The government’s focus on greater integration of services between primary care and secondary care is welcomed by the College. Recognizing this need, the College of Psychiatry is already working closely with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) through a joint Forum, and would welcome an opportunity to work closely with the new Minister for Health, Minister for Primary Care and Minister for Children on this key issue.

“The establishment of a cross departmental group shows particular foresight by the incoming government” remarked Dr Anne Jeffers, Director of External Affairs and Policy for the College. *“This emphasizes the importance of social inclusion and an integrated co-ordinated approach for all with mental health problems, the importance of ensuring that each individual receives not only appropriate healthcare, but also access to employment, housing and education. This cross departmental approach has been shown to improve outcomes in the UK and other countries”* she continued. (Ref. ‘No Health without Mental Health’, UK Mental Health Strategy, 2011.)

Commenting on changes required to the Mental Health Act 2001 and other areas of law, Dr Jeffers said *“The College is pleased to see statements in the recovery programme to review legislation pertinent to mental health. A review of the Mental Health Act is due and needed. The College is preparing recommendations on amendments required. The introduction of a Capacity Bill is long awaited and we urge action on this without further delay. The College has already provided a submission to government and the Department of Justice on this last year.”* (Preliminary Submission Paper - June 2009 on the Scheme of the Mental Capacity Bill, September 2008*)

The College also welcomes other important commitments in the government programme:

- The need to review the care of those with Intellectual disabilities throughout the country is another welcome and urgent requirement. The College would like particular attention given to those who are in placements outside the State, as the required services are absent in this country. (Excluded, Expelled and Exported: The citizens we’ve ignored and those we’ve exiled*)
- The commitment to developing a national strategy to ensure early diagnosis and intervention for Alzheimer’s and other Dementias has been needed for some time, and the college calls for this to be brought forward, rather than waiting until 2013.

- A National Carers' strategy is urgently required, acknowledging the hours of unpaid care provided by family members of individuals with physical and mental disabilities.

The College of Psychiatry looks forward to working with the commitment the government has shown to Mental Health, and has written to the Ministers involved and requested early meetings to discuss these proposals further.

*Reports available at www.irishpsychiatry.ie/publications/CPsychl_publications

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Contact: Andrea Ryder, External Affairs & Policy Manager

The College of Psychiatry of Ireland

5 Herbert Street, Dublin 2 Direct Tel: 01 634 4374 College Tel: 01- 661 8450 Fax: 01 - 662 9677

email: andrea@irishpsychiatry.ie

web: www.irishpsychiatry.ie

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