



Press Statement 05th March 2015

EXPERT GROUP REVIEW OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT 2001

College of Psychiatrists of Ireland sees Expert Group Review as a missed opportunity to improve mental health services in Ireland

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland welcomes the publication of the review of the Mental Health Act. The review will advance the rights of those patients with mental illness who are involuntarily detained. It is also welcome that the review recommends changes to protect those who lack capacity but who do not fulfil criteria for involuntary detention.

The College however sees this as a missed opportunity to improve appropriate access to multi-faceted assessment and intervention for the majority of people with mental health problems. Most contacts for mental health problems occur in primary care and in community based mental health services. Issues such as poor access to counselling and lack of 24/7 access to multi-disciplinary assessments and interventions still affect the rights of people with mental distress. The College had hoped the Review would make recommendations in this regard and as regards statutory monitoring of the implementation of A Vision for Change.

Professor Brendan Kelly, The College of Psychiatrists' nominee on the Expert Group has said:

'The measures suggested in this report will help protect the human rights of that minority of patients with severe mental illness who are treated on an involuntary basis, as well as voluntary patients. Ireland's involuntary admission rates are already lower than those in many other countries, including England. This report will help ensure that the rights of such patients are protected even further.'

However, the vast majority of persons with mental illness are treated on an entirely voluntary basis in primary care and by community mental health teams. Full implementation of A Vision for Change would help ensure that everyone with mental illness has their right to treatment respected. It is imperative that progressive changes in legislation are accompanied by continued development of community mental health services. One in four persons will develop mental illness at some point in life. There is no "them". There is only "us".'

The College will undertake an in depth analysis of the Expert Group Review and will contribute to the debate in a formative way as matters progress towards legislative underpinning of the Expert Group's recommendations.

Ends

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