

## Psychiatrists concerned about superficiality of discussion of Childline report

*The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland fears that uninformed reactions to ISPCC statistics on childhood distress will further delay the development of appropriate interventions for children at risk of mental distress and illness.*

Media coverage of the ISPCC's figures from their Childline service rightly focus on the slow pace of access to appropriate help for children in distress. Classifying all children in distress as needing mental health services, as some reports and political reaction seem to do, only removes pressure for the development of **appropriate early intervention services in the community, psychological and education systems**. This increases the pressure on already under-resourced mental health services.

*"Children exhibiting distress may do so for many reasons" according to **Dr Helen Keeley, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist** and Chair of the Child and Adolescent Faculty of the College of Psychiatrist of Ireland, "Many need educational, psychological and community supports to help them deal with this, not psychiatric intervention." **Dr Keeley** pointed out that children with mental illness need access to fully resourced mental health teams led by specialist psychiatrists as delineated in national policy, **A Vision for Change**.*

*"Lack of appropriate support means that children are not getting the early intervention they may need and are ending up on waiting lists for mental health services they **don't need** or are developing more severe mental health issues, thus increasing waiting times for all".*

**Dr John Hillery, Director of Communication** at the College said: *"The College has previously indicated to government and other, the factors that are causing delay in access to services. These include the systemic problems outlined by Dr Keeley and the lack of appropriate psychiatrists and allied health professionals to take up already funded posts." On the issue of the lack of professionals nationally to fill mental health teams, **Dr Hillery** replied "Recruitment problems need robust examination of the factors that cause them but the College has regularly emphasised the unattractiveness of working conditions for trained psychiatrists in a situation where **A Vision for Change** remains short of full implementation".*

Dr Hillery said that the College welcomes the recently stated intent of the **Minister of State for Mental Health, Deputy Helen McEntee**, to set up a commission to plan for the future needs of the mental health of the youth of the country. The College would question remarks made in interviews with the **Minister for Children, Deputy Katherine Zappone**, proposing that mental health services for children might be best placed in a new agency aligned in some way to Tusla. *"Mental Health Services for all age groups must be part of the planning of the nation's health services and not passed off to a body outside the health services which can only suggest that the health needs of this group are less valued than those of the rest of the population"*. Dr Hillery went on to say that the Minister of State has promised to meet with the College soon and the mental health needs of children will be high on the agenda for that meeting.

**Ends**

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**Notes for the Editor:**

*The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland was formed in 2009. It is the professional body for psychiatrists in the Republic of Ireland. The Mission of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is to promote excellence in the practice of psychiatry. The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is the sole body recognised by the Medical Council and the HSE for the training of doctors to become specialists in psychiatry and for the continuing assurance of the career long competence of specialists in psychiatry. The College supports the delivery of mental health services in line with the recovery model and supports the delivery of the national policy on mental health services A Vision for Change.*

*\*A Vision for Change (2006) is a strategy document which sets out the direction for Mental Health Services in Ireland. It is a framework for promoting mental health at all levels of society and for delivering specialist care to everyone who needs it. It recognises both the strengths and inadequacies of existing services and outlines a strategy for building on the innovations heralded by Planning for the Future. It details a series of actions for developing a comprehensive person-centred model of mental health service provision.*