



The College of Psychiatry of Ireland  
*Cóiliste Síciatrachta na hÉireann*

## Vision without Action

### Implementation of *A Vision for Change*: the report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, four years on.

1. The College welcomes the recent appointment of Mr Martin Rogan as HSE national lead for mental health specifically tasked with realising the recommendations of *A Vision for Change* and urges the Minister for Health to make the implementation of national mental health policy transparent and accountable.
2. The College trusts that the necessary supports will be put in place to enable those in Executive Clinical Director positions to carry out their responsibilities as envisaged.
3. The College of Psychiatry of Ireland believes that implementation of *A Vision for Change* has been, and continues to be slow, uneven and insufficient.
4. *A Vision for Change* was launched on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, and was adopted as national mental health policy. The foreword, by the then Minister of State Tim O'Malley, aspired to a "world-class service to meet the mental health challenges of our society – not least of which is our significant suicide rate, particularly among young people". He wrote that *A Vision for Change* would have "a significant influence on the development of our mental health services into the future".
5. The reality is that the fourth anniversary of *A Vision for Change* comes only weeks after the Inspector of Mental Health Services described wards in St. Loman's Hospital, Mullingar as "unfit for human habitation" and reported that patients in St. Ita's Hospital in Portrane were living in "appalling conditions".
6. Funding of *A Vision for Change* is inadequate and lacking in transparency. The estimated capital cost of implementation (detailed in Chapter 17) was €796.5 million over 7-10 years, not including funds needed for site acquisition. A crude calculation determines that annual funding must be at least €79.7-113.8m. The "new money" allocated by Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan TD in his 2010 Budget was €43m: a shortfall, at best, of €35m, and just 5% of the planned expenditure. Was this even new money? The sum is suspiciously similar to the "over €42m" promised by Minister John Moloney TD on the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of *A Vision for Change*, which was then described as resulting from disposal of named assets ([www.dohc.ie/press/releases/2009/20090126.html](http://www.dohc.ie/press/releases/2009/20090126.html)).
7. In late 2009, the constituent faculties of the College summarised their view on progress in implementing *A Vision for Change*. Some comments were:
  - a. Liaison Psychiatry reported staff losses since 2006.
  - b. In Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH), new consultants are being appointed without critical multidisciplinary team support. CAMH has approximately 1/3 of the staff needed to realise *A Vision for Change* recommendations. Quality of mental health care for our young people, including those cited by former Minister O'Malley, is being continually compromised.
  - c. Learning disability services remain hugely underdeveloped. For instance, a small number of people with challenging behaviour require secure accommodation, and facilities suitable for these people do not exist in Ireland. Consequently, Irish citizens with learning disabilities are in UK institutions, funded by the Irish taxpayer. The principle of equality of care for people with a learning disability is clearly being violated by current practice.

***"Vision without action is a daydream"***  
*(Japanese proverb)*