

Press statement 12 August 2010

The College of Psychiatry of Ireland shares concerns of 'A Mental Health Service in Crisis'

The College of Psychiatry of Ireland acknowledges and shares the grave concerns expressed by the Psychiatric Nurses Association in its recent report 'A Mental Health Service in Crisis' released yesterday.

"The situation in mental health services is difficult but likely to become acutely risky to patients and staff in the coming months unless significant action is taken at government level. The required standards and necessary best practice for modern mental health care will be put in jeopardy or possibly irreparably damaged if the decline in investment and support for mental health services continues along the dismal trends which are well described in 'A Mental Health Service in Crisis' and other recent reports" said a spokesperson for the College. *"The reform programme 'A Vision for Change' in which so many hopes are invested risks being discredited and stagnating for a generation to the potential shame of the Government's Department of Health which must be its champion"* they continued.

"The trends have notable negative impact on the dignity of service users and providers as well as their human rights" pointed out the College spokesperson, *"and we cannot afford to regress to a Victorian model of care when so much effort & progress has been made over the last couple of decades to move away from it. The current and important stigma reduction campaign 'See Change' could backfire and stigma actually worsen if the current situation of serious decline in service standards continues.*

The College fully recognises the requirement for efficiency and reform in providing value for money health care in these extraordinarily difficult times. The College believes the public know the key value of good mental health services and calls for their support in demanding from the Government protection of the mental health services from the relentless & recently rapid disinvestment & loss of frontline staff, particularly psychiatric nursing staff, which they have undergone.

The College calls on all users of the mental health services, their families and carers and other stakeholders to immediately seek from the Government commitments which will:-

- Maintain staffing levels in mental health services
- End the recruitment embargo of mental health professionals
- Provide appropriate & safe treatment & care for the most ill persons as set out in 'A Vision for Change'
- Influence the HSE to prevent further cuts to the capital & revenue funding of mental health services
- Take the measures described in 'REACHOUT' to reduce deaths from suicide
- Take basic and immediate political steps to lessen the chaotic effects of drugs, alcohol, unemployment, debt, homelessness and alienation on our most vulnerable but no less valuable citizens.

Ends:

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