



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

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# Proposed Model for the Delivery of a Mental Health Service for Children with Intellectual Disability

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## Summary Position Paper EAP03/2011

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Approved by Council

The College of Psychiatry of Ireland  
September 2011

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# **Proposed Model for the Delivery of a Mental Health Service for Children with Intellectual Disability**

## **Executive Summary and Recommendations**

This report was completed by the Faculty of Learning Disability Psychiatry to outline current mental health service provision for children in the moderate to severe/profound range of intellectual disability in Ireland and to make recommendations for future service developments.

The increased prevalence of psychiatric disorders in children with intellectual disability cited in this paper highlights the need for a specialist mental health service.

In response to a recent survey conducted by this subgroup, the number of consultant child psychiatrists working in the area of intellectual disability in Ireland was estimated at 3.61. This falls far short of the number recommended in A Vision for Change (Department of Health 2006). In A Vision for Change, the number of child psychiatrists recommended in this specialty was 1 per 300,000 population. These services are being delivered by a number of consultant psychiatrists with a part-time commitment to children with an intellectual disability.

They are not community based and are being delivered in a fragmented way by consultant child psychiatrists working without the support of mental health teams.

There is no Higher Specialist Training Programme for child psychiatrists who want to train in learning disability. There is no national database for child psychiatric services in learning disability.

In spite of the recommendations in A Vision for Change, no funding has been made available to implement these recommendations (Health Service Executive, 2009).

This group supports the recommendations of A Vision for Change but it would view these as a minimum requirement only. Further recommendations have been made in this report.

### **Recommendations**

- A model of mental health service for children with an intellectual disability must be funded and developed to closely parallel that already adopted by the child & adolescent mental health services for children of average ability and those with a an intellectual disability.
- This must be child centred, community based and separate from the existing disability services.

- This model should prioritise a recovery oriented model of care.
- This service must have catchment area responsibility and a clearly defined referral pathway.
- It must be delivered in partnership with families and other agencies involved in the delivery of care to children with an intellectual disability.
- Structures must be set up to enhance communication with other services to ensure a co-ordinated approach in service delivery.
- It must be delivered by a fully funded multidisciplinary mental health team.
- This team should be trained in mental health to provide a range of services to meet the complex needs of these children.
- Services should include out-patient, domiciliary, day hospital and in-patient services as required.
- Provision must be made for children within the mild range of intellectual disability, approximately one third of whom attend these services.
- Provision must be made for children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Provision must be made for adolescents (14-18 years) who have an intellectual disability.
- Policies must be established to enable the easy transition of adolescents into adult mental health services.
- A national database needs to be set up for child psychiatric services in intellectual disability.
- The future of child psychiatry for children with intellectual disability would be greatly enhanced by the development of an academic infrastructure to further foster research and training.
- Service developments must proceed as a matter of urgency to permit the development of a higher specialist training programme to train Child Psychiatrists in the Psychiatry of Learning Disability.
- The Faculties of Learning Disability Psychiatry and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of the College of Psychiatry of Ireland are committed to developing such a training programme but this process will require the support of the HSE.