



CPsychI Press Statement 19 February 2016

Manifesto for Mental Health - Equality of Access for All

Call to Action from College of Psychiatrists to all GE16 candidates

Using 'Equality of Access for All' as the focus, the College of Psychiatrists has issued all candidates running in the General Election with a one page manifesto outlining the top five priorities for mental health in Ireland. To achieve equality of access for all nationally the College is asking candidates, when elected to ensure:

1. **24/7 Community Based Mental Health Teams for All Ages Nationally**
2. **Multi-Disciplinary Team Development including a National Plan for staff Retention and Training**
3. **Nurturing the Mental Health of the Future Generation through support for vulnerable children and resilience education for all**
4. **A national Mental Health Information Technology System**
5. **Increasing the percentage of Health Budget for Mental Health to 12%**

Dr John Hillery, Director of Communication and Public Education for the College explained,

"We hope the one page manifesto with our top five priorities will not only raise awareness among all candidates of what's mapped out in *A Vision for Change**, but when elected provide a starting point from where to begin their deliberations for mental health whether in Government or opposition".

"Although *A Vision for Change* maps out what services should be available to people with mental health problems, **ten years on we still have inequality of access to services across Ireland.** *A Vision for Change* stated 'Each citizen should have access to local, specialised and comprehensive mental health service provision that is of the highest standard'. Our manifesto urges candidates to think 'It's the very least our Nation's mental health is entitled to'."

On the financing of Mental Health Services Dr Hillery said:

"Mental Health Services as part of our overall Health Service has to be more of a priority for whatever government is returned. The cost to our economy due to mental ill health is hugely significant – it was estimated to have cost 2% of GNP in 2008, a €3 billion loss. That was 8 years ago!"

"The shamefully low percentage of health budget for mental health year on year for over a decade (currently 6%) is also a human rights issue. Other countries such as the UK (12%), Canada and New Zealand (11%) have higher percentages but even with this they struggle to fulfil the mental health problem needs of their populations. We now have a Mental Health Division in the HSE which needs to be enabled to do its job efficiently, effectively and plan for the longer term."

"The College is calling for a minimum five year budget and implementation plan with an adequate percentage of the overall health budget rising to 12%. The historic piecemeal approach with annual budgeting militates against delivery of cohesive national planning and must change."

Nurturing the mental health of the future generation

Over 8% of Irish children have a moderate to severe mental health difficulty and 2% of children at any point in time will require specialist mental health intervention states the College manifesto.

On nurturing the mental health of the future generation Dr Hillery explained,

“We also need to provide for the future generation’s mental health. Providing for the resources and tools to enable the Department of Education to mind the mental health of children and adolescents is essential. Appropriate educational supports, individual counselling, early recognition of mental health needs and nurturing resilience in children will reduce morbidity through substance abuse, self-harm and suicide that currently scar all our communities.”

Call to College members

The College has also asked its entire membership base, both qualified and trainee psychiatrists, to use the one page manifesto at local level when and where possible.

“The message will be stronger if members interact with candidates in their local area on the issues central to Psychiatrists”, said Dr Hillery. “We encourage them to print out the College manifesto and use it to lobby local political candidates in the coming week when confronted with them on their doorstep or call into the local constituency office with it.”

[See manifesto here](#)

Ends

Note to 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.*

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