



Friday, 4th November 2022

College warns of ‘profound issues’ with services for adults with intellectual disability around the country

The Chair of the Faculty of Psychiatry of Learning Disability of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland has said there are profound difficulties with services for adults with intellectual disability throughout the country.

Dr Maeve Moran was speaking following a shocking report this week on RTE Prime Time (1st November). The report highlighted the plight of Mary Marmion’s son Sam (27). Sam, who has an intellectual disability and is autistic, has been denied access to adequate care for many years. This has prevented him fulfilling his potential and has negatively impacted on his and his mother’s emotional and physical health.

Dr. Moran said: “The Irish system for caring for adults with intellectual disabilities is beyond crisis. The only thing keeping the system from complete collapse is the support given to adults with such disabilities by their extended families. Were it not for the efforts of these unqualified care-givers who continue to care for their children well into adulthood, the system would simply collapse. The continued reliance on aging parents is particularly unacceptable given the huge challenges faced by such parents when caring for young adults as opposed to young children.

Based on her own clinical experience, Dr Moran said that the failures in the disability service highlighted in the Prime Time programme are replicated across the country leaving many families in the same or worse position as the Marmion family. Dr Moran confirmed that she herself is dealing with approximately 30 families dealing with a similar situation to the Marmion family and that experience was also the case amongst her colleagues in the Faculty of Psychiatry of Learning Disability at the College of Psychiatrists.

Dr Moran said there is an urgent need for a root and branch examination of the provision, funding, and organisation of care for children and adults with disabilities in the Irish state.

Dr. Moran cited the **Winterbourne** Report which was commissioned in the UK in the wake of a BBC Panorama programme in that country (2011) which detailed abuse at a hospital of that name.

Dr. Moran said that the report highlighted a widespread failure to design, commission and provide services that give people the support they need close to home and recommended changes to the accountability of management and corporate boards for what happens in their organisations. The report has led to an extensive programme of action to transform the care of people with intellectual disability and set out a model of care for very vulnerable persons, which prioritised the needs and rights of the individual patients.

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Editors' note

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is the professional body for psychiatrists in the Republic of Ireland. It is 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 mission of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is to promote excellence in the practice of psychiatry.

Issued on behalf of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland by Gordon MRM

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