

# Lobbying Network: Action 47

Warning: Serious Health Risk – Act now to protect mental health funding

**AMNESTY  
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**Further cuts to mental health spending must come with a serious health warning. The chance to recover and to play a full role in their community is at risk for thousands of people. We need you to [take action to prevent mental health facing further cuts](#) in Budget 2011.**

#### **BACKGROUND: WHAT IS THE ISSUE?**

Mental health services simply cannot be maintained at humane levels if there are further cuts in Budget 2011. They have already been cut unfairly and disproportionately.

Spending is down 9.2 per cent since 2006, and at 5.3 per cent of the overall health budget, is now at its lowest level in modern history. More than half of all staff cut from the HSE in 2009 came from the mental health services, despite the fact they only represent 9 per cent of the HSE's workforce.

In 2006 the Government's policy *A Vision for Change* promised to end institutionalisation and provide modern community-based services. Yet progress in developing community services has ground to a halt. We still have people living in conditions described by the Inspector as "entirely unacceptable and inhumane", 200 admissions of children into adult inpatient mental health units in the last year; and large numbers of people with intellectual disability in psychiatric institutions.

We know there is a financial crisis - and that it is making the mental health crisis worse.

Financial stress, debt and unemployment are putting a massive burden on people's mental health. Demand for services are growing as people look for support, and suicide and self-harm levels rose sharply last year.

Further cuts in Budget 2011 will condemn another generation of Irish people to a mental health system left over from the Victorian age of asylums.

#### **HUMAN RIGHTS AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

The human right to the highest attainable standard of mental health entitles you to mental health services that are available, accessible, acceptable, and of good quality. The UN has also stated that small budgetary allocation for mental health can be a significant barrier equal enjoyment of the right to health.

#### **SPECIFICS: WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR?**

AI recommends that the Government take the following steps:

1. Commit to exempting mental health funding from cuts in Budget 2011.

#### **KEY POINTS:**

- Mental health services cannot be maintained at humane levels if the budget is cut again in 2011.
- Log on to [healthrisk.ie](http://healthrisk.ie) and take action to show your support for the campaign to protect mental health funding.

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Log on [www.healthrisk.ie](http://www.healthrisk.ie).
- **Take action** by following the simple on-screen instructions and sending emails to all your local TDs and the Ministers for Finance, Health, Mental Health and the Taoiseach. You can also use the letter templates enclosed to send hard copy letters.
- **Pass it on.** Circulate this email to your friends, family or colleagues. Post it on facebook or twitter.
- **Tell** your story, by contacting Amnesty International, if you have been affected by these issues and are interested in becoming a spokesperson for mental health and human rights
- **Join** Amnesty and make us stronger by adding to the number of human rights defenders in Ireland (Text JOIN to 51444 or call 01 836 8356)
- **Get** involved in our new anti-discrimination campaign [www.amnesty.ie/mentalhealthdiscrimination](http://www.amnesty.ie/mentalhealthdiscrimination)

## RESOURCES:

- Template letters, as well as tools and tips for lobbying, are available for download on our online Lobbying Network resource centre at [www.amnesty.ie/mentalhealth](http://www.amnesty.ie/mentalhealth).
- To order our anti-discrimination resource packs call 01 863 8300.

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