

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Mental Health E-Bulletin Issue 9 February 2011

"Every person has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health"



Introduction

Welcome to Issue 9 of the Amnesty International Ireland's Mental Health E-Bulletin. This is a special edition to outline the actions and pledges we want the candidates and political parties in the up-coming election to make in order to ensure mental health is a political priority for the new Government.

We would very much welcome your input into the next edition – please forward relevant information, event details, etc. to E: mentalhealth@amnesty.ie

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Manifesto demands

Amnesty International Ireland is calling for increased political prioritisation for mental health so that people with mental health problems can have the chance to recover and to play a full role in their community, as is their right.

In order for this to happen, AI submitted specific mental health asks to all the political parties to urge them to make real commitments to prioritise mental health in the next Government. These commitments must be grounded in the following three priority actions:

1. Mental health service reform: Improve accountability and transparency in planning and financing mental health service reform.

For more than 25 years Ireland has been promised an overhaul of mental health services, away from the current model that prioritises medication and hospital based care, towards a system that has community based services at its heart. But it is clear policy alone has not delivered change, so we are asking political parties to introduce law to ensure that *A Vision for Change* is implemented

2. Legislation: Modernise Ireland's mental health legislation in line with the new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Mental Health Act 2001 is currently not human rights compliant. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) highlighted this in their recent report on Ireland following their visit to four mental health facilities last year. It pointed out a number of concerns with the Mental Health Act 2001, including the lack of protection for so-called 'voluntary patients', the need to amend the Act in relation to the use of electro convulsive therapy and the lack of an independent capacity assessment. AI is calling for the review of the Act, scheduled for this year, to be comprehensively conducted to bring the Act in line with international human rights standards.

3. Whole of Government: Promote cross-departmental action to effectively combat social exclusion, prejudice and discrimination against people with mental health problems.

The human rights approach to mental health is not just about having access to health services. It recognises that access to other human rights, including education, employment, housing and social welfare are crucial. *A Vision for Change* sets out demands for departments outside health, and AI echoes the call for those departments to ensure they are recognising the needs of people with mental health problems in their strategies.





Mental Health Reform – election action

AI is a partner in Mental Health Reform (formerly the Irish Mental Health Coalition), which is asking everyone to take action to make mental health reform a priority in the next Dáil. The organisation has set out a five point plan to champion mental health reform and is asking **you** to raise these concerns with election candidates.

Log on to **mentalhealthreform.ie** and use the web form to email your local candidates, telling them to make mental health reform a political priority.



Get On Board

AI is also supporting a new initiative to get young people's mental health onto the general election candidates' agendas. **Get On Board** for Youth Mental Health is sending out a positive message to the candidates outlining what they could achieve if they set their minds to it. They are looking for politicians to learn more about youth mental health as an issue, to invest in the next generation and to promote the well-being of our nation.

The campaign is asking voters to support their call to action by emailing their candidates using the web form and talking about the issues when canvassed. The supporting organisations, Inspire Ireland, Foróige, Headstrong and BeLonG To, want everyone to 'Get On Board': to take action and make a real difference to the lives of young people.

Find out more: **www.getonboard.ie**



Mental Health Act 2001 Review

The Government is due to review the Mental Health Act 2001 by November, and AI is demanding this review is comprehensive, and will bring the legislation in line with international human rights standards, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. AI's own review of the Act, outlining our recommendations, will be available via our website later next month.

For more information email: **mentalhealth@amnesty.ie** or call **01 863 8300**.





Get involved

Join us

Amnesty International is made up of people who recognise that there is strength in numbers. The more who join us, the louder our voice becomes. To join, please text the word JOIN to 51444 (std rate) or log on to www.amnesty.ie/join. Alternatively, just call the office on 01 863 8300.

Find out more

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