

[Script for phone calls to TDs]

It is best to ring the TDs' offices in Leinster House. See contact details below. It is simply a matter of ringing the number and asking for your relevant elected official. If you prefer to contact your TD at the local advice clinic you can do that too.

Leinster House Address

You can send letters to all TDs to Dáil Éireann, Leinster House, Dublin 2.

Leinster House Main Switch Board

Dáil Éireann LoCall: 1890 337 889

(outside of Dublin only)

from within Dublin: (01) 618-3000

Oireachtas Website: www.irlgov.ie

"Hello, my name is *insert your name*, may I speak with Deputy *insert elected official's name*? (Whether you are speaking to a secretary or the elected official, the following script will work)

I am from the constituency and I am writing to express my concern about mental health in Ireland.

The education system has a vital role to play in promoting children's mental health; and in identifying children with or at risk of mental health problems, and providing them with psychological and other services and/or referring them to appropriate mental health services. Schools and teachers need to be supported in this role.

The National Council for Special Education estimates that 86,083 children - i.e. 8% of all children - have a special educational need arising from a mental health difficulty. According to the Council, there are many gaps and deficits in how children's special educational needs are currently identified and met, including under-resourcing of schools' capacity to deliver inclusive education.

The 2006 mental health policy, *A Vision for Change*, highlights the importance of children and adolescents remaining engaged in the education system as a crucial first step in breaking the cycle of social exclusion experienced by many people with mental health problems. For children who present a challenge to the school system, it says, the provision of alternative school placements should be explored.

It is advised that schools must play a role in early detection and intervention, and that liaison and work between schools and mental health services is essential. It makes a number of important recommendations to the Department of Education and Science.

[Insert specific concerns in your own community related to the monthly question(s)]

I would be grateful for an answer to the following questions:

What steps has the Department of Education and Science taken to implement the recommendations in *A Vision for Change*?

Will the Department of Education and Science set out a plan for action in the areas identified in *A Vision for Change*, and if so, when?

I am calling on you to discuss this issue with your party colleagues and raise it with the Minister for Education and Science.

It is critical that official neglect be ended now, and that the rights of children with mental health difficulties are respected.