

[Sample letter to Min for Health]

**[Insert your own
address]**

Mary Harney TD
Minister for Health and Children
Hawkins House
Hawkins Street
Dublin 2

[Insert date]

Dear Minister,

I am writing to express my deep disappointment at the Implementation Plan published recently by the Health Service Executive (HSE) for the mental health services components of the Government's national mental health policy, *A Vision for Change*.

The Implementation Plan is simply inadequate. For example:

- Nowhere does it indicate where **additional funding** will be required.
- It also **lacks detail** in most areas. For example, the section on forensic services for children – in-patient beds and community teams – contains no detail at all other than setting up a working group to look at this area and assess need, and where the finish date is set for July 2008, i.e. there is no detail or timeline for actually establishing the services.
- In other areas of the plan, similar working group findings are proposed, with **no detail of actual service expansion**. As many as one-third of all homeless people have a mental illness yet the published plan contains no information on when or how the two multidisciplinary, community based teams allocated to Dublin to provide a mental health service for homeless people will be provided.
- The human rights of the people with mental health problems were to be put at the heart of service planning and delivery. **The Implementation Plan addresses none of these areas.** *A Vision for Change* contains important recommendations for empowerment, advocacy, peer support, offering a range of therapies, supporting carers, and, perhaps most importantly, recovery. It recognises the crucial importance of having service users centrally involved in all planning and decision-making, from official processes to their individual cases.
- The plan purports to deliver the right to advocacy services of all service users through funding one nongovernmental organisation, with **no attention whatsoever to the distinct advocacy needs of groups such as children.** Regarding role of and development funding for voluntary services, there is no detail at all.

I urge you to instruct the HSE to deliver a proper implementation plan by January 2009. If *A Vision for Change* is not to remain an aspirational document, a detailed implementation plan must be produced at the earliest opportunity, setting out the major activities to implement *A Vision for Change*, with explicit annualized performance targets and indicators, budgets and timelines.

Over two years after the publication of *A Vision for Change*, mental health service users and providers are still struggling with an outdated, fragmented, and severely under-resourced system. The HSE's Implementation Plan offers no vision of how the decades of neglect will be ended. By the third anniversary of *A Vision for Change*, in January 2009, we need to have a clear picture of where we are going.

[Insert specific concerns in your own community, or use your experience as an example of your concern, related to the monthly question(s)]

Government is politically responsible for the actions of the HSE and must drive the agenda in this critical period. I would be grateful for an answer to the following questions:

1. Is the Department of Health and Children satisfied with the HSE Implementation Plan for *A Vision for Change*?
2. If not, what action will the Department take?
3. Does the Department agree that a further detailed implementation plan must be produced at the earliest opportunity, setting out the major activities to implement *A Vision for Change*, with explicit annualized performance targets and indicators, budgets and timelines? If so, will this be published by the third anniversary of *A Vision for Change*, in January 2009?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert your name]

Same text to:

Dr. Jimmy Devins T.D.
Minister of State with responsibility for Disability and Mental Health
Department of Health and Children
Hawkins House
Hawkins Street
Dublin 2