

## [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. *This script is only meant to be a guide for your conversation.*

### **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](http://www.irlgov.ie)

### **Introduction:**

- Begin by introducing yourself and stating where you are from (the Deputy will quickly recognise you as a constituent!).
- Explain that you are a member of the Amnesty Mental Health Lobbying Network and that you would like to speak about Mental Health.

### Example:

"Hello, my name is insert your name, may I speak with Deputy insert elected official's name?"

I am from insert home address here in your constituency. I am a member of the Amnesty International Mental Health Lobbying Network and I hope to have a few minutes of your time to speak with you about Mental Health issues."

### **Issues:**

- In this conversation we would ask that you concentrate on three main issues: Budget 2009; the recommendations of A Vision for Change and the sub-Committee on the Adverse side effects of Pharmaceuticals for increasing research on non-drugs based treatments; any local issues around mental health that you would like to bring to your representative's attention.
- As with the action letter, speak from personal experience or those of people you know about the deficiencies in mental services in your region. Local papers are also a good source of information. Speak about the work that you or your community group are undertaking. Most importantly, emphasise that you consider mental health to be a **voting issue**.

Example:

"Firstly, I want to tell you how disappointed I am with Minister Moloney's announcements on Mental Health in last weeks Budget. I am deeply concerned that the budget did not allocate any vitally needed development money for mental health services as promised in the 2006 mental health policy, *A Vision for Change*. The commitments made in terms of child mental health services and suicide prevention, while necessary, in no way meet the needs of the sector. I believe that people have a human right to adequate and appropriate mental health services but this is not the reality for most people seeking services in Ireland today.

The Mental Health Commission report, *The Economics of Mental Health Care in Ireland*, estimated that the direct annual cost of poor mental health in Ireland is €3 billion, or 2% of GNP. In light of the current economic climate it makes sense that suitable investment in the mental health sector is needed to offset these massive costs in terms of lost employment, absenteeism, lost productivity and premature retirement. Surely the Government should be increasing not decreasing investment in mental health services.

I would like to know, **will the Government allocate the promised €25 million for mental health services in order to achieve the goals of AVFC and put in place adequate mechanisms to ensure that it is spent accountably?**

"I would also like to raise my concerns about the government's failure to act on recommendations from both *A Vision for Change* and the sub-Committee on the Adverse Effect of Pharmaceuticals that commit to increasing independent funding for research on the effectiveness of various mental health interventions, not just drug therapy.

I, like many others, am very concerned about the over-reliance on medication that is a feature and a result of inadequate mental health services in Ireland. *A Vision for Change* recommended (at 19.11) that mental health services receive increased funding for research on the effectiveness of mental health interventions in order to avoid the potential conflict of interests that emerges where drug companies provide this funding. **Can you please tell me what steps have been taken to implement this recommendation and what extra funding has been made available?**

At the same time the sub-Committee report made a series of recommendations on best practice in the areas of regulation of the drug industry, responsibilities and codes of practice for mental health professionals, health service systems and public awareness campaigns. **I would like to know what the Government is doing to bring these recommendations into effect** given that the sub-Committee urged immediate action on the issue.

"Finally I would like to speak to you about mental health service issues in your constituency. **[Include your concerns here. Try to be as specific**

**as possible and have as much information available as you can. This will help your argument. You may like to contact your local health services directly in advance of your contact with the Deputy. Remind your Deputy that these are the issues that you are concerned with when it comes to voting.]**

### **Conclusion:**

- Firstly, thank the Deputy for their time.
- Also, indicate that you would like to receive follow up on the questions that you have raised. The Deputy may not be able to answer your questions on the spot. Ask for a letter or return phone-call to confirm that the Deputy has acted on the issues discussed and the outcomes, if any, of these actions.

### Example:

“Thank you very much for your time Deputy. I appreciate that you may not be able to answer all of my queries at this time. However, I would be grateful if you could consult with your party or parliamentary colleagues on the matters raised here and provide me with some feedback **[Leave your contact details with the Deputy or his/her secretary]**”

### **Background Information:**

Your Deputy may be unfamiliar with Mental Health issues and particularly the Human Rights based approach of the Lobbying Network. The information below may help in setting out your position.

### Mental Health and Human Rights

Ireland is a signatory to the human rights treaty, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR). Article 12 of this treaty states that *every person has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health*. The highest attainable standard of mental health means that that, for any person in Ireland:

- They will receive appropriate mental health services when they need and want them, and those services will be designed towards people’s empowerment and recovery.
- When they are using services they will be treated with dignity and respect.
- Government policy will be conducive to good mental health, and not negatively impact on anyone’s capacity to enjoy good mental health.

This human right is not confined to the right to all to mental health services, Government also has a duty to promote conditions in which people can lead a mentally healthy life, addressing the underlying determinants of mental health, such as access to work, education or appropriate housing. It must also create an environment where stigma

and discrimination against those experiencing mental ill-health is minimised.

Ireland will be reporting to the United Nations Committee on ESCR in 2009 on its implementation of this treaty and must account for its action on mental health. Despite significant efforts, Irish mental health promotion, prevention and services remain out of step with international best practice and, as such, fail to fully comply with international human rights law.

### Budget 2009

You may be interested to read more on the implications of Budget 2009 for mental health services.

You can read the Minister of State's Budget Press Release here:

<http://www.dohc.ie/press/releases/2008/20081014c.html>

And the Amnesty International response here in the news section of our website:

[www.amnesty.ie](http://www.amnesty.ie)