

[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. **TD's are usually in attendance at their constituency offices on Friday's and you may also be able to make appointments to visit on Saturdays.** *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

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 two main issues: The urgent need for a full review of the Mental Health Act (2001); 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 an important **voting issue**.

Example:

"Firstly, I wish to speak to you about the need for a review of the Mental Health Act 2001. The recent High Court Case of *SM v The Mental Health Commissioner and Others* highlighted the seriousness of the shortcomings that exist within the current legislation. In this case the challenge to the validity of the involuntary detention of an

individual was upheld. In anticipation of this judgment, the Government passed emergency legislation in the form of the Mental Health Act 2008

I understand that the Department of Health and Children carried out a review of the Mental Health Act in 2007. However, it was admitted that this review was not comprehensive and that a fuller review should be conducted. The date for this review was set at November 2011.

I think that the recent events as well as ongoing developments since the enactment of the Act show that the full review is required more urgently. I would like to know, **will the Government bring forward the date of the review of the Mental Health Act 2001 to the early part of 2009? In addition, will this Government commit to acting effectively to amend and draft new legislation based on the recommendations of this review?**

I am also aware that the last review of the Mental Health Act, in Recommendation 51, advised the setting up of an independent monitoring group of Department officials, service users, carers and other stakeholders to engage in ongoing review of the way the Act is working. I think that this would be a very useful development and this kind of consultation is important for developing good legislation. However, I am unaware of the existence of this group as yet. **Can you tell me if this group has been set up yet and if not, when will it be established?**

“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.

Amnesty International Response to Emergency Legislation

You can read Amnesty International response to the Government's emergency legislation in the news section of our website:
www.amnesty.ie