

Ms Mary Harney, T.D.  
Minister for Health and Children  
Department of Health and Children  
Hawkins House  
Hawkins Street  
Dublin 2

**[Insert date]**

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you, on the occasion of the third anniversary of *A Vision for Change*, to highlight my continued dismay at the Government's failure to act on the recommendations contained within the 2006 document.

While circumstances have changed since its publication, and it is impossible not to acknowledge the seriousness of the country's current economic problems, I ask you to recognize and remember that mental health care has never reached reasonable standards in this State. Furthermore, as has been consistently stated by the Government in response to previous representations, "implementation of *A Vision for Change* is dependent to a much greater extent on the remodeling of existing resources than on new additional funds". It is therefore imperative that the economic crisis does not become an excuse for the failure to deliver on *A Vision for Change*. Rather more, given the link between economic recession, financial pressures and mental health needs, the improvement of our mental health services must be at the heart of the Government's response lest an economic crisis become a social crisis too.

Coinciding with this anniversary The Irish Mental Health Coalition published the report *Late for a Very Important Date*. It highlights slow or absent progress across the recommendations of *A Vision for Change* set against a context of increasing demand for services. The report poses five questions to the Government which I would like to reiterate here and to which I request a considered response:

1. Why has no Director of Mental Health been appointed despite the recommendations of the Minister and the Independent Monitoring Group?
2. When will the practice of admitting children to adult wards end?
3. When will the HSE publish an implementation plan for *A Vision for Change* that has been approved by the Minister with detailed year on year targets, timeframes and human and financial resource commitments?
4. How many fully staffed Community Mental Health Teams, are presently in place around the country?
5. Will the Government commit to revising and ring-fencing mental health funding in light of increasing demands on the services?

In 2009, a year of local and European elections, the issue of mental health services will not go away. Rather its significance will increase. Alongside an expanding group of activists I will continue to lobby this and successive Governments for genuine political commitment to the mental health rights of all individuals in the State.

Yours Sincerely,