

[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: Urging renewed commitment to safe-guarding and developing mental health services in the face of economic cut-backs; getting responses to the questions outlined in .
- 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:

"I am ringing you at this time because it is the third anniversary of the publication of A Vision for Change. Despite the time that has passed there has been no real drive in implementing this strategy for mental health services.

I wanted to express my disappointment to you in relation to this matter.

I understand that presently, the Government is working within very difficult economic circumstances.

At the same time, the Government has repeatedly stated, in response to lobbying that “implementation of *A Vision for Change* is dependent to a much greater extent on the remodelling of existing resources than on new additional funds”. It does not make sense to me therefore that the recession would be an excuse for continuing to fail in bringing about reform of mental health services.

I am also concerned about the link between economic recession, financial difficulty and mental health needs.

I think that now, more than ever our mental health services need to be on hand and well able to meet the needs of those experiencing difficulty. This government is obliged under Article 12 of the International Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to provide the highest attainable standard of mental health.

The Irish Mental Health Coalition has produced a report documenting the failure to implement *A Vision for Change*, called *Late for a Very Important Date* which I hope the you have read. It poses the following questions to the government to which I would welcome a 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?

“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.

Late for a Very Important Date

You can read a the full report by the Irish Mental Health Coalition online at:
http://www.imhc.ie/newsroom/3rd_anniversary_vision_for_change.doc