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Dr. Ruth Barrington  
Chairperson  
Independent Monitoring Group on A Vision for Change  
C/o Dublin Molecular Medicine Centre  
Newman House  
85a St. Stephens Green  
Dublin 2

February 2009

Dear Dr. Barrington

I am writing to you to express my concern at the continued uneven and disjointed implementation of A Vision for Change. This month saw the release of the Inspectorate of Mental Health Services Report for 2008, highlighting once again the need for drastic improvement in our mental health services. However, a focus on service-provision alone is not sufficient to protect the human rights of individuals experiencing mental health difficulties. The right to health embraces a range of socio-economic duties on Government to promote conditions that promote a healthy life, for instance things such as food and nutrition, housing, access to employment, and a healthy environment.

I believe that, in order to achieve real improvement in the lives of people affected by mental health difficulties there must be a comprehensive, intersectoral action plan for *A Vision for Change* in which specific, measurable targets, annual milestones and relevant human and financial resources are set out for each relevant Government Department. This is the approach that has been recommended in *A Vision for Change*:

**Recommendation 5.3:** A framework for interdepartmental cooperation in the development of cross-cutting health...policy should be put in place.

While I appreciate that the Minister for Equality, Disability and Mental Health has responsibilities across four Departments, and that the Office for Disability and Mental Health works with other Departments in driving implementation of *A Vision for Change*, this falls short of a genuine whole of government approach. In particular, no formal cross-departmental implementation plan has been put in place and there are no officials designated with responsibility for implementing *A Vision for Change* outside of the Department of Health.

I strongly urge the Independent Monitoring Group to use its position to influence the Department of Health and Children to bring forward a comprehensive cross-departmental action plan for carrying forward relevant recommendations. If A Vision for Change is to become a reality, the Government must spell out clearly how it aims to implement the policy across Government and designate responsibility for carrying this out.

Yours Sincerely

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