

Lobbying Network: Action 37

Mental Health: New Year's Resolutions

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We need to make mental health a political priority for 2010. Below are the objectives we are asking you to help us to campaign on in the coming year. Start by asking your politicians to make a promise - a New Year's Resolution to increase the priority of mental health and work on these issues – and then lobby with us over the next year to make sure they keep that promise.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Review of the Mental Health Act 2001

The Mental Health Act 2001 covers the detention and treatment of people with mental health problems who are in in-patient facilities against their will.

We do not think that the current law meets international human rights standards. We want to make sure the Government brings these laws in line with up to date standards.

The new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities confirms that people with mental health problems have the same rights as everyone else. The Government should use this as its guide.

How Will This Help Me?

If you are ever in a position where you might be detained under the Mental Health Act you can be confident that the law fully protects your rights.

Cross Departmental action on mental health

Many Government Departments have not engaged directly with *A Vision for Change* or see it only as the responsibility of the Department of Health.

But the right to mental health depends on other rights like housing, work and education. Departments with responsibility for these areas have an obligation to take action on mental health.

Even where Departments have set out specific disability plans, not enough is being done for mental health. We are demanding more.

How Will This Help Me?

Issues like housing, education and employment will have a specific mental health focus that will help reduce the discrimination that many people with mental health problems experience.

Legislation for community-based services

For over a quarter of a century it has been Government policy to move from a hospital-dominated to community-based mental health service. Yet still only one fifth of mental health staff work in community care and these services are incomplete and unevenly spread.

Change has been too slow and policy alone is not working. We need a new approach. We will demand law to deliver the full range of community mental health and related services promised in *A Vision for Change*.

How Will This Help Me?

If you experience a mental health problem you will have a better chance of accessing the service that you think is most appropriate for you, and this will be available to you in your community, as is your right.

KEY POINTS:

- All politicians must make mental health a priority in 2010.
- They can do this by supporting our 3 objectives

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WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- **Write** a letter to you local TDs and Senators and to the Minister for Health and Children
- **Circulate** this action in public places such as your community centre, library, church, or health-centre
- **Tell** your story, by contacting Amnesty International, if you have been affected by these issues and are interested in becoming a spokesperson for mental health and human rights
- **Join** Amnesty and make us stronger by adding to the number of human rights defenders in Ireland (Text JOIN to 51444 or call 01 836 8356)

RESOURCES:

- Template letters, as well as tools and tips for lobbying, are available for download on our online Lobbying Network resource centre at www.amnesty.ie/mentalhealth.

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GOT FEEDBACK?

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