

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

16 December 2009

Dear Minister

I am writing to you to ask you to make a New Year's resolution. I want you to make mental health a personal political priority in 2010.

The past year has been a difficult one, not least for people with mental health problems. The link between economic difficulty and increased mental health problems is well proven. According to the Samaritans, debt and money have become the biggest cause of distress for people in the past year. Figures for the first quarter of 2009 show a 43 per cent rise in suicide rates, the first increase in recent years.

But we can change this.

Amnesty International Ireland, in partnership with people who have experience of mental health problems, has come up with three recommendations:

- Review the Mental Health Act 2001 and update it in line with the new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Relevant Government Departments, not just the Department of Health and Children, take action on mental health;
- New legislation should be introduced to deliver appropriate community-based mental health services

For my part, I will continue to campaign on mental health throughout 2010 and beyond. Only you, as the Minister with ultimate responsibility, can make the changes in policy and legislation that are needed to improve the lives and respect the human rights of people with mental health problems.

2010 can be the year when we finally deliver on decades of promises for mental health. But it will require political willpower. Please make this happen and commit to the above actions.

Yours sincerely,