

27 January 2010

Dear Deputy

I am writing to you in relation to the Government's responsibility to provide adequate and appropriate housing for people with mental health problems.

The right to good mental health is closely related to the fulfilment of the right to housing, which is guaranteed in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Ireland has ratified. The National Economic and Social Forum has also recognised the link between the need for adequate housing and the social inclusion of people with mental health problems.

Having somewhere safe, secure and comfortable to live is a human right, and cannot be denied to somebody because they have a mental health problem.

I understand that the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government is planning to bring forward a housing strategy for people with disabilities and that this strategy currently has a draft chapter relating to mental health. While this is welcome, it is necessary to ensure that the strategy is published without delay and that the provisions for mental health remain intact and are not watered down.

Specifically I am asking you to make representations to ensure that:

1. When publishing its housing strategy for people with disabilities, the Department includes comprehensive guidelines relating to people with mental health problems.
2. This should include clarifying the agency responsible for providing housing supports for people with mental health problems, as well as how these supports will be delivered.

This publication of this strategy will be an important step in fulfilling the socio-economic rights of people with mental health problems and could act as a model of good practice for other Government Departments with responsibilities for mental health.

I look forward to receiving a response from you,

Yours sincerely,