

# Lobbying Network: Action 44

## Delivering on A Vision for Change

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Despite stating their commitment to implementing A Vision for Change in the programme for Government last year, the Government has still not published a time frame for the implementation of its mental health policy. In a damning report in June the Mental Health Commission's Annual Report found that there had been no overall discernible improvement in services in 2009, describing "a number" of mental health facilities as "entirely unacceptable and inhumane." There has been enough empty promises the Government must deliver the services promised in A Vision for Change now.

### **BACKGROUND: WHAT IS THE ISSUE?**

In October 2009, the renewed programme for Government stated:

"In 2010 we will publish a plan with an implementable timeframe for the achievement of faster access to mental health services and improved mental health status, building on Vision for Change with an emphasis on:

- The role of primary care as the backbone of mental health services;
- Preventive medicine and early detection and intervention, based around primary care services in the community
- Ensuring greater access to counselling and psychological services;
- Close integration of psychotherapy, counselling and social care services with primary care teams;
- Addressing the gaps in provision of mental health facilities for children and young people."

However 10 months later minimal progress has been made. In fact, in June, the Mental Health Commission's Annual Report stated:

**'Year after year the Inspector for Mental Health Services and the Mental Health Commission outline critical failures and yet year after year we see little improvement. The impact on the lives of people experiencing mental health problems is profound.'**

The Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Group for Government's mental health policy, *A Vision for Change* highlighted a lack of leadership on mental health within the HSE, a lack of robust and transparent governance structures, and little progress in establishing the Community Mental Health Teams.

Yet again, the government is failing to deliver on its commitments to mental health.

### **WHAT DO HUMAN RIGHTS SAY?**

Article 12 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) sets out the right to the highest possible standard of physical **and mental health**.

This means that everyone has the right to facilities, goods, services and conditions that help them to achieve the highest attainable standard of mental health, including access to a system of health care.

Ireland has ratified the ICESCR, which means that the Government has a duty to make progress towards making this right a reality.

### **SPECIFICS: WHAT ARE WE ASKING FOR?**

1. An update from the Government on the progress of the commitments that were made in the area of mental health in the programme for Government

2. To ensure the delivery of the promises made in the programme for government.

### **KEY POINTS:**

- We are asking the Government to urgently deliver on the promises it made in the programme for government.

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### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- **Circulate** this action by distributing to friends and family or leaving copies in public places (such as your community centre, library, work place)
- **Write** a letter to An Taoiseach Brain Cowen, Minister John Gormley, Minister for Health Mary Harney and your local T.D
- **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](http://www.amnesty.ie/mentalhealth).

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### GOT FEEDBACK?

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