

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

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you to request an update from the Government on the progress that has been achieved on the commitments that were made in the renewed programme for Government in the area of mental health.

The specific commitments are as follows:

“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 *A 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 making full use of multi-disciplinary primary care teams;
- Ensuring greater access to counselling and psychological services;
- Close integration of psychotherapy, counselling and social care services with primary care teams;
- Making appropriate amendments to the Mental Health Act 2001 to address concerns regarding involuntary committals and procedures;
- Address the gaps in provision of mental health facilities for children and young people.”

The renewed programme for Government states that the way we treat people with mental health problems and other marginalized groups is “a true test of our values and the effectiveness of our social provision”. On the evidence of the most recent reports on our mental health services, this is a test we are failing dismally.

Both the Mental Health Commission Annual Report for 2009 and the Independent Monitoring Group Fourth Annual Report on Implementation of *A Vision for Change* have shown us that there has been no overall discernable improvement in the last year and that in some cases conditions remain ‘entirely unacceptable and inhumane’

It is now time for your Government to act with the same decisiveness and commitment on its promises for mental health in the programme for Government as it has done on other promises made in that document.

To do anything else will simply continue the shameless disregard for the rights of people with mental health problems that has been sadly evident in the past.

I look forward to a response from your office,