

Young people in mental health units to be helped understand their treatment and assert their rights

360 children and adolescents admitted each year to get “toolkit” from Mental Health Commission

Monday 22nd February 2010. The Mental Health Commission today launched a website and written resource pack to assist young people availing of mental health services. The *Headspace Toolkit* is designed to equip young people being treated for mental illness to speak up for themselves, assert their rights and get involved in decisions concerning their care and treatment.

An average of 360 children and adolescents were admitted to mental health units for mental health care and treatment in each of the past three years, according to the Mental Health Commission.

The *Headspace Toolkit* provides young people with information on what they can expect when they go into hospital, what their rights are, who they can talk to and how to speak up for themselves. It encourages them to take part in decisions about their care and treatment and provides them with information and tips on how to be assertive. The toolkit is designed for all young people admitted to hospital and is intended to empower them by providing them with the necessary tools to aid their recovery.

Speaking today at the launch of the Headspace Toolkit Hugh Kane, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Commission said, “There is no official advocacy group representing young people suffering from mental illness. So there is a vacuum of information that needs to be filled. This toolkit is an important step in giving young people who are suffering from a mental illness the right information to help them understand the care and treatment they are being given and the right tools to enable them to be part of decisions being made.”

There has been a lot of interest in the toolkit’s website www.headspaceireland.ie so far, with people from across the world including Canada, the US, Australia, the UK and of course here at home accessing the site.

Minister of State with responsibility for Mental Health John Moloney TD said, “The availability of this Toolkit will ensure that our younger service users will be equipped with the information and knowledge to enable them to actively participate and lead their own recovery.”

Minister of State for Children and Youth Affairs, Barry Andrews TD stressed the importance of protecting the human rights of children who suffer from mental illness. “We as a society have a duty

to protect our children and to ensure their human rights are protected at all times. We need to ensure that the best interest of children is at the core of every decision we make, every policy we implement and all legislation that we enact. I am heartened by the feedback that this toolkit has already received and I hope that it will assist children by allaying their fears, empowering them and hopefully putting them firmly back on the path to recovery.”

The toolkit was developed collaboratively with a number of key stakeholders and central to this was the involvement of young people themselves. The toolkit can be accessed at www.headspaceireland.ie and all tools are available for download on the site.

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Note to the Editor:

The Mental Health Commission is an independent statutory body. The primary functions of the Mental Health Commission are to foster and promote high standards of care and good practice in the delivery of mental health services and to ensure that the interests of those involuntarily admitted are protected, pursuant to the Mental Health Act 2001.