

PRESS RELEASE



Mental Health Commission welcomes Expert Group's Report on new policy framework and the progress on the establishment of the Mental Health Tribunals

The Mental Health Commission today, 24 January 2006, welcomed the publication by the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy of its report, *A Vision for Change* by An Tánaiste and Minister for Health & Children, Mary Harney TD.

Commenting on the launch of the Report, Brid Clarke, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Commission, said the Government had issued a timely report on the framework required for the development of mental health services over the next 7-10 years. She pointed out the need for development of new policies to match recent developments in mental health legislation.

“Mental health law and mental health policy are two integral elements of the mental health service system. Legislation is required within mental health to protect and promote the rights of people with a mental illness, in particular the rights and welfare of those admitted involuntarily. This report on mental health policy provides the framework for the development of mental health services. Its publication is timely given the introduction of the Mental Health Act 2001. The Act is the most significant legislative provision in mental health in 60 years and introduces fundamental protections and rights for those availing of mental health services,” said Ms Clarke.

Ms. Clarke also welcomed the decision of the IHCA and IMO to co-operate with the full implementation of the Mental Health Act by participation of their consultant psychiatrist members in Mental Health Tribunals.

“The Mental Health Commission has been working hard to set up the necessary systems to enable the establishment of the mental health tribunals as defined under the Act for those involuntarily admitted. We look forward to the consultant psychiatrists applying for the panels and continuing to work with the Mental Health Commission on the full implementation of the Mental Health Act 2001” commented the Chief Executive.

Ms Clarke went on to say that the Expert Group's policy report outlines the key principles underpinning the new model of service delivery, including working in partnership, inclusion, integration and community based service provision. The Mental Health Commission, in particular, welcomed the emphasis on user and carer involvement, the development of the recovery model within the Irish mental health services and the delivery of services by multidisciplinary teams.

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The Mental Health Commission has just published a discussion paper on the Recovery Model within Irish mental health services and will be issuing a further discussion paper on Multidisciplinary Team Working next week. Both these papers complement and expand on the service model described in *A Vision for Change*, and provide an opportunity for feedback from all those interested in mental health services.

The Mental Health Commission has been to the forefront in advocating user involvement in all aspects of mental health services. The Mental Health Commission's report *Quality in Mental Health*, published just a year ago, and based on consultation with all the stakeholders in mental health, identified the need to introduce an empowering approach to service delivery. The main facets of quality in an empowering approach in service delivery include knowledge and information, partnership in planning, review and decision making, choice, rights, informed consent and access to peer support. This approach is endorsed in the report - *A Vision for Change*.

The Expert Group Report also proposes significant changes in the organisation of the delivery of mental health services in Ireland. "It's a challenging and exciting period for mental health services in Ireland. Mental health is crucial to our overall health, and the Mental Health Commission welcomes the increased interest and discussion on mental health and the delivery of our mental health services. Courage, commitment, support and flexibility will be required by all those involved in this new era for mental health services in Ireland" concluded Ms Clarke.

The Mental Health Commission is an independent statutory body with responsibility for promoting and fostering high standards and good practices in the delivery of mental health services. It has a key role in monitoring and evaluating service delivery in this time of new legislative provision and policy development. The Commission will be preparing a more detailed response to the Expert Group's report on mental health policy having considered its content in greater detail.

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Further Information, please contact:
Brid Clarke, Chief Executive Officer
01-6362400

Editor's Note:

The Mental Health Commission was established in April 2002, under the provisions of the Mental Health Act 2001. Its overarching statutory functions are:-

- to promote, encourage and foster high standards and good practices in the delivery of mental health services and
- to take all reasonable steps to protect the rights of persons detained in approved centres (Section 33.1).