

The Mental Health Commission welcomes yesterday's announcement by the Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children Mary Harney TD that all remaining provisions of the Mental Health Act 2001 will be brought into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006. The Act among other things makes provision for the establishment of Mental Health Tribunals (Mental Health Act 2001, Part 2). The establishment of Mental Health Tribunals allows for the automatic independent review of all involuntary admissions to approved centres. The Act also makes provision for requirements governing consent to treatment, including electro convulsive therapy and administration of medicine (Mental Health Act 2001 Part 4), the establishment of a register of approved centres for inpatient admission (Mental Health Act 2001, Part 5) and rules governing restraint and seclusion (Mental Health Act 2001 Part 6).

The full implementation of the Act provides Ireland with a very significant piece of legislation which will protect the rights of all users of our mental health services and brings Ireland into line with its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and with the European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003.

2006 has been a very significant year for the Irish mental health services. In January of this year, the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy published its report, *'A Vision for Change, Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy'*, which sets out the blue print for the mental health services in the years to come.

With the protection of service users' human rights placed on a statutory footing through the Mental Health Act 2001 and a blue print for the development of our services in *'A Vision for Change'* there is now a great opportunity to instigate change for the better in our mental health services and to incorporate users needs and requirements. There are exciting and challenging times ahead for all those involved in Irish mental health services. It is an opportunity we must all embrace.