

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

**EMBARGOED Wednesday September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

An important research study on service users views of publicly funded mental health services commissioned by the Mental Health Commission is published today – “The Views of Adult Users of the Public Sector Mental Health Services”.

This research study provides detailed information on how service users experience mental health services within the public sector . One of the key findings of the study is that the current organisation of mental health services is inappropriate and unsuited to the needs of people with a mental illness. The research study written by Dr. Elizabeth A. Dunne, of the Department of Psychology, University College Cork suggests that the Mental Health Commission highlight the “importance of looking at the particularity of mental health care rather than continuing to see it as a version of physical medicine”.

This research study, based on individual interviews and focus groups involving users of the public sector mental health services provides a picture of how the services are perceived to respond to people’s mental health needs and proposes a number of recommendations for the future.

Service users reported that mental health services can be difficult to access, and that the stigma associated with mental illness can delay contact to a critical degree. Emergency services for people in crisis that may result in self-injury or suicide are seen as lacking or gravely deficient. Another concern of the service users is the over reliance on medication. Too little time is spent interacting therapeutically with service users – such therapeutic interaction is limited by the organisation of services and the absence of multidisciplinary teams. The multi-booking system which operates currently in outpatient services does not meet the needs of service users and is generally viewed as dissatisfactory.

Dr. Elizabeth Dunne, based on the views of service users, makes a number of observations and suggestions for strategic action. These include:-

- ◆ Alternative organisational service responses which meet the needs of service users, in particular the expansion of community based models of intervention, and increased multidisciplinary inputs.
- ◆ the development of fast-responding and accessible services for people in personal crisis

- ◆ the availability and access to non-pharmaceutical interventions
- ◆ including and responding to carers' views
- ◆ consideration of ways to enhance communication and engagement with service users.

The Mental Health Commission has advocated the involvement of service users in all aspects of mental health services, ranging from involvement in individual care and treatment plans to involvement in service planning and delivery, since its establishment.

This research study, along with the Government policy document – ‘A Vision for Change’ and the Mental Health Commission report published in 2005 on ‘Quality in Mental Health Services – Your Views’, provide a clear vision on how mental health services in Ireland should be structured and delivered.

A service model based on multidisciplinary, community based, recovery orientated interventions will lead to new experiences and outcomes for service users. The Mental Health Commission is committed to promoting “research on these innovative practices in mental health service delivery to ensure that the services are in line with best practice and of a high standard”.

The Mental Health Commission wishes to thank Dr. Dunne, and her colleagues for their commitment to this research study. We wish to thank the service user organisations and personnel in the Health Service Executive for their input, assistance and support. But above all else, we wish to thank all those who participated in the study. This study would not have been possible without their agreement to participate, and their willingness to share their views and ideas with all of us.

## **MEDIA QUERIES**

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