

1 in 4 People around the World will Experience a Mental Illness

Mental Health Commission to host Seminar as part of World Mental Health Day

9th October 2008. World Mental Health Day will be marked in Ireland and worldwide tomorrow as part of an international campaign to prioritise mental health issues.

According to the World Federation for Mental Health which leads the event, approximately 450 million people – approximately one out of every four people - around the world will experience a mental illness that would benefit from diagnosis and treatment.

The 2008 World Mental Health Day theme is: *"Making Mental Health A Global Priority: Scaling up Services Through Advocacy and Action"*. The aim is to draw more attention to the need for a stronger advocacy movement on mental health issues.

In Ireland, the Mental Health Commission will host a seminar focusing on Mental Health Advocacy which will be chaired by well known broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan. **The seminar will take place tomorrow in the Round Room, Mansion House, Dawson Street, Dublin 2 from 10.30am until 1.30pm.**

Dr. Edmond O'Dea, Chairman of the Mental Health Commission said: "Some progress has been made in Ireland and worldwide in recent years in removing the stigma from mental illness. The report we published recently, *The Economics of Mental Health Care in Ireland*, showed that investment in mental health services not only benefits patients but pays its way economically through reducing the cost to society of mental illness. It also gave research results showing Irish people would be willing to pay for community mental health services.

"At this time of economic difficulty it is important not to cut spending on mental health services, which brings such benefits to individuals, to the economy and to society. Short-term savings in the mental health budget may well impose high economic costs elsewhere in terms of the costs of absenteeism, early retirement, social care and medical interventions required for individuals who have not been treated early and effectively enough."

World Mental Health Day is an initiative of the World Federation for Mental Health, a global mental health organization with members and contacts in more than 150 countries and its aim is global mental health education, awareness and advocacy.

The seminar which takes place in the Mansion House tomorrow will hear from speakers including:

- Mr Paddy McGowan a mental health advocate and lecturer on mental health issues who will deliver a speech on *"Advocacy a right not a privilege."*
- Mr James Wooldridge a mental health advocate and founder of Positive Notions Training Consultancy which provides motivational speaking and mental health training services with a focus on inspiring positive action. Mr Wooldridge will present on *"Advocating Mental Wealth."*
- Rúairí McKiernan, Chief Executive of Spunout.ie will present *"Freedom to be in a SpunOut World."*
- Dáil na nÓg Councillors' Jennifer Hegarty and Robert McDonnell will present the *"Views of Dáil na nÓg on Mental Health Issues for Young People."*

The Mental Health Commission is the independent statutory body with responsibility for promoting and fostering high standards and good practices in the delivery of mental health services in Ireland.

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Note to editor: Speakers' Biographies:

Mr Paddy McGowan

Dublin City University, School of Nursing.

Originally from Omagh in County Tyrone I am currently employed as a lecturer with DCU School of Nursing. I recovered from Schizophrenia with the support of other survivors and professionals and can speak authoritatively and humanely from the *inside out*, relying not on the presuppositions of dubious and largely unproven scientific theories, but from reflecting sensitively, honestly and often painfully on the experience of "hearing voices" synonymous with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. I was involved in organising the first "Voices" conference in Derry in November 1999. As a member of the Institute for Recovery in Mental Health and a prominent member of the International Network of Treatments Alternatives for Recovery (INTAR) I am committed to creating alternatives to the so-called medical or maintenance model. I set up the first user group in Ireland in 1994 and was the founder and first Chief Executive Officer of the Irish Advocacy Network, heavily involved in developing peer advocacy training alongside staff awareness training in user empowerment and advocacy to an accredited degree level. I served on the National Disability Association's Ad Hoc Focus Group on Mental Health and the Management Committee of the United Kingdom Advocacy Network. I have also been instrumental in designing and implementing user led research focusing on user-satisfaction with statutory mental health services throughout Ireland and continue to lecture on mental-health advocacy and recovery oriented approaches to severe psychiatric

disability in Universities and Colleges locally, nationally and internationally, alongside facilitating training for mental-health and allied professionals, families and carers.

Mr James Wooldridge

James is a mental health advocate and founder of Positive Notions Training Consultancy. For the last twenty years James has lived with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder and in 2005 embarked on a new career. He left his career in sales to become a self-employed freelance mental health trainer, speaker and motivator. Using his experience gained and talents acquired James advocates a message that is real and relevant to today's society, a message that is honest, inspirational and not short of humour.

Chief Executive SpunOut.ie Rúairí McKiernan

Rúairí McKiernan is the Founder of SpunOut.ie, which is a multi-award winning youth organisation. SpunOut.ie empowers young people to affect personal and social change by providing them with an innovative forum for engaging on issues that affect them. SpunOut.ie currently reaches over a quarter of a million people per year and has been featured extensively in the national media. Rúairí believes strongly in the idea that everyone can advocate for positive mental health and wellbeing whilst at the same time we must collectively work for a better society.

Dáil na nÓg Councillor Jennifer Hegarty

Jennifer is 17 years old and is a member of Fingal Comhairle na nÓg. She was delighted to be elected to the Dáil na nÓg Council 2008-2009 and is enjoying working with other councillors on the issue of mental health. Currently in 5th year in Mount Sackville School, Jennifer enjoys basketball, debating and chatting with her friends, which she says is vitally important for maintaining her mental health and thus worth the phone bill.

Dáil na nÓg Councillor Robert McDonnell

Rob is a member of the 2008-2009 Dáil na nÓg Council. He is from Kells in County Meath and is a member of Meath Comhairle na nÓg since 2006. Rob is part of the mental health group on the current Dáil na nÓg Council and is also the Dáil na nÓg representative on the National Office for Suicide Prevention Steering Committee. Rob enjoys golfing, martial arts and (usually) school, and is officially Barack Obama's biggest Irish fan.

Chairperson Miriam O'Callaghan

Miriam O'Callaghan was born and raised in Dublin. She qualified as a solicitor before beginning her broadcasting career on ITV's *This is your Life*. She joined the BBC as a producer in 1987, and went on to become a reporter on BBC2's *Newsnight*. In the early '90s Miriam returned to Ireland to present RTE's current affairs flagship programme *Prime Time*, while continuing to cover the Northern Irish peace process for *Newsnight*. In August 2000, Miriam co-founded Mint Productions, an independent production company that specialises in documentary. Unusually for a current affairs presenter, Miriam was voted Best TV Personality at the Irish Film and Television Awards in 2003. To her surprise, she won the RTÉ Guide Style Award at the 2007 IFTAs following another public vote. Outside of her work on *Prime Time*, Miriam presents her own chat show, *Saturday Night with Miriam*, during the summer and supports a large number of charitable causes throughout the year.