

Progress remains slow on implementation of Vision for Change

Wednesday 26th January 2011: Five years after the unveiling of the government's policy on mental health services 'A Vision for Change' progress remains slow, according to the State body that regulates and fosters high standards in the mental health services, the Mental Health Commission (MHC).

The MHC today welcomed positive progress made during 2010, but said that if the vision in the policy is to be realised, the Government will have to commit itself strongly to continuing the implementation of the policy within the timeframe originally set out.

"The Commission used its statutory powers during 2010 to drive progress and we had some success", according to Mental Health Commission Chairman Dr Edmond O'Dea. "During the year we imposed stringent conditions on three approved centres, The Commission's decision to impose conditions on three of the older institutions followed the report of the Inspector of Mental Health Services in 2009, which showed poor conditions in a significant number of approved centres."

Ms Patricia Gilheaney, Chief Executive Officer at the MHC welcomed the progress made during the year. She said, "Our decision to impose conditions forced the HSE to prioritise and take the necessary steps to improve mental health service provision in the relevant areas, and we welcome the effort and improvement made. We will continue to utilise our powers and functions under the Mental Health Act in pursuit of a modern mental health service."

A Vision for Change, the government's policy on mental health was published in January 2006. It is a policy document designed to build positive mental health services throughout the community and to provide community based specialist services for people with mental illness. The policy proposed the reorientation of the delivery of mental health services away from the old style model of institutional care to community based services.

Commenting on the fifth anniversary of this policy Dr O Dea said, "We are now five years into this policy document, the mid-way point, and we have not yet seen the fundamental changes envisaged when this document was being written. The fact is that if we are to succeed in our aim to provide a truly modern, accessible and integrated mental health service then 'A Vision for Change' must be implemented in full. I hope that 2011 will be the year of fundamental change in our mental health services."

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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.