

Report on admissions of young people to adult psychiatric units published

Need to respond to new restrictions on child admissions addressed

Monday December 20th: The Mental Health Commission has today published a report on the admission of young people to adult mental health wards in Ireland.

The report was commissioned by the Mental Health Commission to

1. Examine the factors contributing to the admission of children under 16 in 2010 to adult psychiatric units and paediatric wards.
2. Examine the challenges for providers in meeting the mental health needs of the under 18s in the context of the addendum to the Mental Health Commission Code of Practice for the admission of children (see notes to editors below).
3. Present a report of the findings and recommendation to the Mental Health Commission.

Among the report's conclusions are

- The planned provision in the Government policy document A Vision for Change of 108 child and adolescent inpatient beds is generous by today's standards where the emphasis is on community care as close to the patient's home as possible
- It is not yet certain all these beds will be provided
- The deadlines for ending the admissions of 16 and 17 year olds set out by the Mental Health Commission are ambitious (see note 1 below)
- Community and inpatient units should be more networked together
- Admissions of young people to inpatient beds in Limerick seem to take place more easily than in other parts of the country. The practice of

admitting patients for an inpatient period of assessment and treatment carries significant risks and is out of step with the rest of the country

- An apparent lack of engagement of community care services and other partner agencies in offering support to children and families in crisis means some children and young people may be receiving a mental health service when their needs are in fact social.

The report makes a number of recommendations and will now be studied by the Mental Health Commission. The Chief Executive of the Mental Health Commission Hugh Kane said: "I would like to thank Dr Sally Bonnar for the work she put into this report and for the report itself. Her recommendations form a very solid basis for discussion on how best to deliver psychiatric services to children and adolescents in Ireland, and I look forward to that discussion taking place among service users, staff, health administrators and policy-makers."

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Note to Editors:

1. Mental Health Commission

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.

2. Addendum to Code of Practice on child and adolescent admissions

From July 1st 2009 an addendum to the Mental Health Commission's Code of Practice on the admission of children came into effect. This says that in respect of the admission of a child to an approved centre for adults, the following applies:

- a) No child under 16 years is to be admitted to an adult unit in an approved centre from 1st July 2009;
- b) No child under 17 years is to be admitted to an adult unit in an approved centre from 1st December 2010; and
- c) No child under 18 years is to be admitted to an adult unit in an approved centre from 1st December 2011.

If, in exceptional circumstances, the admission of a child to an adult unit in an approved centre occurs in contravention of the above, the approved centre is obliged to submit a detailed report to the Mental Health Commission outlining why the admission has taken place. The Commission should be notified of all children admitted to an approved centre for adults within 72 hours of admission and also notified of the discharge of all children from an approved centre for adults within 72 hours.

3. Statistics on child and adolescent admissions 2007 – 2009

Below is a table from the 2009 report of the Mental Health Commission, showing child and adolescent admissions by age and unit type for 2007, 2008 and 2009.

Table 9: Numbers of Admissions by Age and Unit Type for 2007, 2008 and 2009

Age	2007		2008		2009	
	Adult Unit	Child Unit	Adult Unit	Child Unit	Adult Unit	Child Unit
≤15 years of age	14	99	24	90	12	89
16 and 17 years of age	203	36	223	55	188	76
Total (Admissions by Unit Type)	217	135	247	145	200	165

4. A Vision for Change

A Vision for Change government policy on mental health was published in January 2006. A Vision for Change is a policy 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 and envisages specialist community care and treatment that addresses the biological, psychological and social factors that may contribute to a person's mental illness.

