



Mental Health Reform

Promoting Improved Mental Health Services

Submission on CORU Statement of Strategy 2017 – 2021 15th August 2016

Mental Health Reform (MHR) welcomes this opportunity to comment on CORU's draft statement of strategy 2017 – 2021. As the national coalition promoting improved mental health services and implementation of the mental health policy *A Vision for Change*, Mental Health Reform makes this submission with particular reference to the health and social care professionals working in mental health services.

Mental Health Reform supports CORU's vision, mission and values. However, as set out in our submission on CORU's statement of strategy 2013 – 2016 we recommend that the recovery ethos, as described in *A Vision for Change* be incorporated into CORU's vision.

A Vision for Change encapsulates the meaning of recovery stating that [it] ... "should inform every level of service provision". The associated principles of recovery recognise that services should operate from a hopeful orientation that supports recovery; listen to and work in partnership with people who use services; offer choice and the opportunity for individuals to exercise their autonomy, and support the social inclusion of people with mental health difficulties. The recovery ethos is further endorsed by the Mental Health Commission in its Quality Framework for mental health services and in its report on a recovery approach within Irish mental health services. Mental Health Reform's full briefing paper on recovery can be found at this link <https://www.mentalhealthreform.ie/resources/>.

Recent efforts have been made to instil the recovery ethos in a number of mental health services across the country. However, such organizational change requires continued action and commitment, including the provision of adequate resources, education and training. CORU is ideally placed to promote such change, as Ireland's multi-profession health and social care regulator. There is no doubt that implementation of the recovery ethos is fundamental to achieving high quality service delivery and adherence to international human rights principles.

Mental Health Reform recommends that the recovery ethos be incorporated into the education and training of the health and social care professionals under CORU's regulation. Cultural and attitudinal changes are systemic and require that multi-disciplinary professionals identify with and appreciate the importance of such values to ensure they translate fully into practice. A key component of such education and training would include service user, family member and carer involvement. The Mental Health Commission has developed clear guidance on the need for compliance with individual care and recovery planning; to respect the voice of the individual and to offer choice and control to

the individual in their own care. Ultimately what is required is a shift from an approach of leadership and paternalism by the services to one of partnership. The hope is that such a shift, implemented at the level of education, would empower health and social care professionals to more consistently and meaningfully involve the individual in decisions about their own treatment. Such an approach does not negate the value of clinical expertise, but views such expertise as one of many valued resources. People living with a mental health difficulty develop an understanding of their condition over time. They often know from their own experience what works best for them in maintaining their mental health and what does not.

Despite developments in service user and family member engagement in recent years, it is clear that there is wide variation in levels of support for 'partnership' in mental health services across the country. For example, since the introduction of regulations governing the operation of mental health approved centres in 2006, there has been a consistent failure of compliance with the regulation on individual care plans. In 2015, 30% of approved centres were non-compliant with this regulation.¹

Finally, it is of fundamental importance that CORU expand its objective on engagement with key stakeholders to include service users, family members and carers. Individuals with first-hand experience of the services bring a unique perspective and a vast amount of expertise and knowledge on the strengths of current service delivery, in addition to continued shortfalls and potential solutions. Mental Health Reform recommends that CORU establish service user engagement mechanisms to ensure that this group of individuals are involved in the continued design, development and evaluation of regulations of health and social care professionals.

A key recommendation of *A Vision for Change* is the involvement of service users, family members and carers in every aspect of service development and delivery.

Mental Health Reform advises that CORU incorporate the above recommendations into the values, missions, and strategic objectives outlined in its draft statement of strategy 2017-2021 in order to effectively promote the highest standards of professional competence, education and training among health and social care professionals. As Ireland's only multi-profession health regulator CORU is in a unique position to promote implementation of the recovery ethos, consistently across the services. Ultimately, through its regulations, CORU has the potential to ensure better mental health services for children and adults living in Ireland.

About Us

Mental Health Reform is the national coalition working to promote improved mental health services and the implementation of the mental health policy *A Vision for Change*. Mental Health Reform is available to discuss the above recommendations. Please contact Kate Mitchell, Policy and Research Officer at 01 874 9468 or via email at kmitchell@mentalhealthreform.ie for further information.

¹ MHC (2016) Mental Health Commission Annual Report 2015. Dublin: MHC.