



Mental Health Reform

Promoting Improved Mental Health Services

Briefing Note on Fianna Fáil Motion re Mental Health Tuesday 2nd July 2019

Mental Health Reform (MHR) is Ireland's leading national coalition on mental health. With over 70 member organisations, we work together to drive progressive reform of mental health services and supports in Ireland.

MHR welcomes the Fianna Fáil motion on mental health scheduled in the Dáil for Tuesday 2nd July. The motion provides an opportunity to discuss existing shortfalls in mental health service delivery across the country and to debate possible solutions. The motion raises important issues, with a particular focus on inpatient mental health settings, including not limited to:

- Governance and management deficits within mental health services
- Out-dated mental health legislation which fails to adequately protect people (adults and children) when they go into hospital for mental health care and treatment
- Lack of appropriate mental health services and supports for children and young people and
- Poor conditions in inpatient mental health services

MHR's national consultation *My Voice Matters* gathered feedback from service users and family members about their experiences of the mental health services in Ireland. The findings from this consultation, published in March 2019, reflect much of the information contained in the motion, which draws significantly on the recent annual report of the Mental Health Commission and the report of the Inspector of Mental Health Services.

While it is imperative that inpatient mental health services are improved, it is important to recognise that the majority (approximately two thirds) of individuals who access mental health services, use community (outpatient) services. MHR's national consultation indicates that many people who access community mental health services do not experience service provision which is modern, recovery focussed, human rights based, or is in compliance with national or international standards.

This can be seen very clearly in the following survey findings:

- Almost 20% of participants reported that they did not feel like they were treated with dignity and respect by community mental health services (CMHSs)
- Just one -third (32.5%) of participants felt that they were 'always' well supported and listened to by their current psychiatrist

- 60% reported a high focus on medication as part of their treatment and care
- Almost 40% indicated they were not involved as much as they would like in decisions about the medication they take
- Four in every five (80.3%) indicated that they would like to be involved in these decisions about their medications
- Two thirds (66.2%) reported that they did not have a written recovery care plan developed with their CMHT, despite being national policy for over 13 years
- Almost half (46.4%) disagreed that someone on their mental health team frequently talks to them about recovery as part of their treatment
- Only a third of participants (34%) reported that they had never wanted to complain about the mental health services
- Of those who did complain, over half reported that nothing had been done about their complaint

In addition to developing inpatient mental health services, there is a fundamental need to reform mental health services in the community. Mental Health Reform has developed a series of recommendations on foot of the national consultation findings, including that

- Community mental health team members should be adequately trained and supported by management to talk to service users about recovery, to talk to them about their strengths and to discuss how their mental health difficulty affects other areas of their life
- HSE mental health services should ensure that an individual recovery/care plan is developed in partnership with each service user following contact with the services, and is regularly updated in collaboration with the service user
- HSE mental health should provide opportunities for all service users to be involved in decisions about their medication, including the type of medication they are being prescribed, and be fully informed about potential risks and benefits
- HSE mental health should ensure that every service user is informed, following contact with the services, by a member of the mental health team of the HSE's complaints process and how to make a complaint about the mental health services.
- HSE mental health services should ensure that all service users can avail of an independent advocate to support them in making a complaint

Moreover, MHR recommends the immediate implementation of the full range of recommendations included in its national consultation reports. An executive summary of MHR's national consultation with service users can be found [here](#). A complimentary report on the experiences of family members, friends and carers/supporters can be found [here](#).

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