



Irish Mental Health Coalition

Campaigning for improved mental health services

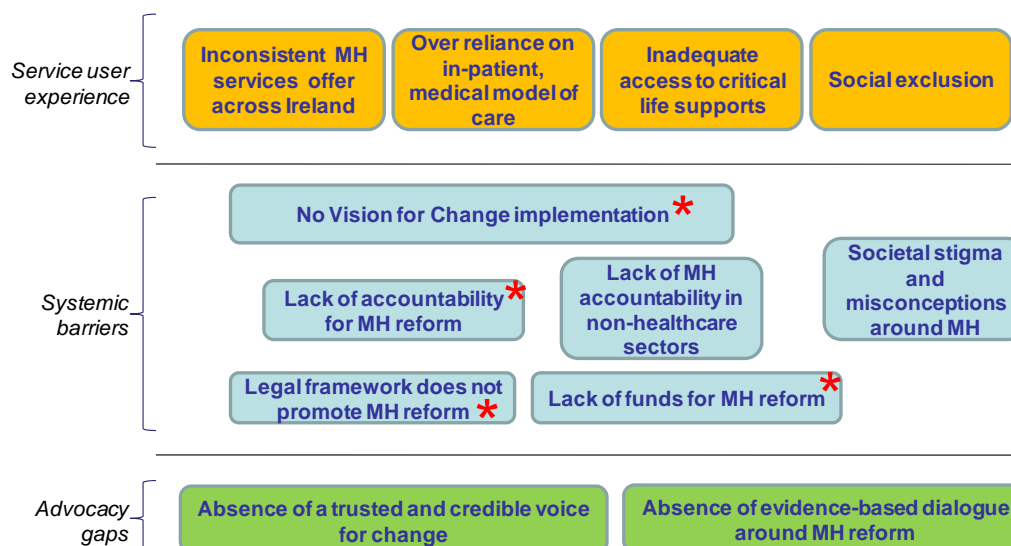
Presentation to the Independent Monitoring Group

8th January 2010

The Irish Mental Health Coalition campaigns for improved and prioritised mental health services in Ireland to achieve a vision where people experiencing mental health difficulties achieve and enjoy their right to the highest attainable standard of mental (and physical) health.

The Coalition welcomes the opportunity to meet with the Independent Monitoring Group. The IMHC reports to the IMG to date have acknowledged progress in areas of service user engagement, partnernship programmes such as WISDOM and youth mental health programmes, but progress is intolerably slow.

The IMHC analysis of the inadequacy of mental health reform is captured in the chart below:



The IMHC welcomes and commends the recent work of the Mental Health Commission 'Vision into Action?'. It represents a clear articulation of factors impacting slow implementation to date.

It is proposed at this juncture to consider some of the 'developments' over the past twelve months and assess how they support progress towards implementation of *A Vision for Change* and address the systemic barriers to reform outlined above and in the report of the Mental Health Commission.

ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY – A Vision for Change 2009 – 2010.

1. Need for Director(ate) of Mental Health

The appointment of the Assistant National Director for Mental Health is progress. But the question arises as to whether the scope, authority and accountability of this post meets the need identified for a Directorate for Mental Health. Can it deliver the impetus for reform?

Equally while the appointment of clinical directors for mental health is welcome, questions arise as to the adequacy of the recruitment process in ensuring commitment to Vision for Change implementation. Clarity is also required on the function, responsibility and accountability of clinical directors for mental health reform?

2. Public and published information action plan

A basic standard for any Implementation Plan is that each activity should have financial and human resources attached to it. The

present Implementation Plan simply does not provide an adequate basis on which to benchmark progress. Further, no other Department has published any plan for implementing its responsibilities in respect of mental health policy.

3. Protect mental health funding and ring-fence funding from sale of lands

There is a need to interrogate the budget commitments in 2010 in detail. The commitment in budget 2010 of 43m for capital investment in mental health welcome. Details are required on where and how that funding will be used. Consideration is also need as to the implication of tying multiannual funding to the sale of lands.

Further, the implementation of the HSE National Service Plan 2009 shows capital programmes remain un-opened because of moratorium on recruitment. Is this pattern to be repeated in 2010 developments?

Other Issues in 2009

National Service Plan 2009

- Modest targets – difficult to determine status e.g. C&A teams – at target of 55 but are partial teams – what does this mean?
- Interrogate why and how funding not used/delayed. Of €500,000 for progressing development with service users the October 2009 report notes ‘As sanction has been received to progress these developments in 2009, the finalising of the service agreements with the organisations to progress these initiatives is in train. Of €250,000 for early intervention initiatives (DETECT) by October 2009, €62,500 spent with the service plan. Earlier reports indicate sanction for spending given in June.
- Of 35 WTEs for Child and Adolescents appears by October, 2009 7 in place; of 1.05m allocated, €60,000 spent.

Increasing Demands on Mental Health Services

In times of recession, certain public services inevitably have increasing demands – unemployment assistance, debt management, *and* mental health services. The impact of the increasing demands is significant. The Inspector notes ‘what we have seen with respect to financial cutbacks is the tendency to reduce staffing in community programmes to maintain acute in-patient programmes’.

Ineffective Use of Resources

The IMHC considers that measures can and should be taken to ensure more effective use of and accountability for existing mental health resources.

- Value for Money Report clearly highlights mental health services funding and staffing residences for persons whose housing needs should more properly be the responsibility of the housing authorities. Higher than necessary supports systems. Not just a financial issue but a privacy, dignity and rights issue.
- Continued detention of people at the Central Mental Hospital who are ready to be discharged because of a continued failure to introduce an amendment to the Criminal Law (Insanity) Act 2006.

PROSPECTS FOR 2010

The position remains one of acute crisis in the lives of people experiencing mental health difficulties. Priorities for 2010:

- Accountability with reality check – nationally and regionally; What happens to Mental Health Commission report?
- Public access to information - publication by the HSE of quarterly reports to the Independent Monitoring Group and six monthly reports to DoHC including detailed information on progress to meeting commitment and how funding is spent;
- A capital programme must be produced as soon as possible for the modernisation/construction of community-based facilities,

- Addressing moratorium on recruitment of mental health services staff.