



Mental Health Reform

Promoting Improved Mental Health Services

Snapshot analysis of the concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland, United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

4th February 2016

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has today, 4th February 2016, published concluding observations on Ireland's children's rights record. The concluding observations were developed following an examination of Ireland by the UN Committee on 14th January in Geneva, Switzerland. Mental Health Reform has sought to inform the discussion between the UN Committee and Irish Government through its submission to the Children's Rights Alliance parallel report to the Committee. This submission outlined ongoing gaps in child and adolescent mental health services and supports across the country. Mental Health Reform's position on child and adolescent mental health services was further promoted by attending the examination in Geneva. While the Committee on the Rights of the Child has made a number of recommendations to Government, this snapshot analysis will outline those recommendations that relate specifically to mental health.

The following are the key findings and recommendations developed by the Committee on mental health:

Findings

1. There is inadequate coordination between the State party bodies responsible for child protection, mental health and disabilities resulting in fragmented or inadequate care being provided for children in need of such services
2. There is a lack of comprehensive legislation on children's consent to and refusal of medical treatment, particularly in mental health services
3. Children are being admitted to adult psychiatric wards due to inadequate availability of mental health facilities for children, there are long waiting lists for access to mental health support and there is insufficient out-of-hours services for children and adolescents with mental health needs, particularly eating disorders
4. There is a lack of a child-focused advocacy and information service for children with mental health difficulties
5. The Committee notes the recent adoption of a suicide prevention strategy by the State party. However, the Committee remains concerned about the high number of suicides among adolescents in Ireland
6. The out-of-hours social work emergency service is insufficient and there are insufficient accessible counselling services for children who are affected by abuse

Recommendations

1. The State should undertake measures to ensure that children in alternative care who have disabilities or mental health needs have their needs addressed in an integrated and comprehensive manner; to this effect, the State party should establish appropriate coordination mechanisms to ensure effective interagency cooperation between the State party's Child and Family Agency and relevant departments of its Health Service Executive
2. The State should enact legislation that explicitly and comprehensively provides for children's consent to and refusal of medical treatment, and ensure that this legislation should be in line with the objectives of the Convention and encompass clear recognition of children's evolving capacities
3. The State should undertake measures to improve the capacity and quality of its mental health services for children and adolescents; in doing so, the State party should prioritise strengthening the capacity of its mental health services for in-patient treatment, out-of-hours facilities, and facilities for treating eating disorders
4. The State should consider establishing a mental health advocacy and information service that is specifically for children, and accordingly accessible and child-friendly
5. In the light of its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development, the Committee recommends that the State party further strengthen its measures on the prevention of suicide, which should take into account the specific needs of children and adolescents, and ensure the allocation of adequate human, technical and financial resources for its effective implementation
6. The State should ensure sufficient 24-hour refuge accommodation for persons affected by domestic violence and their children and provide redress and rehabilitation to the victims

The Committee also recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to address its previous recommendations of 2006 (CRC/C/IRL/CO/2) that have not been sufficiently implemented. Recommendations made in 2006 relating to mental health include the following:

1. Make full use of the findings and implement recommendations of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy appointed by the Minister of State at the Department of Health in 2003
2. Undertake awareness-raising and sensitization measures to prevent stigmatization and ensure that focus is given to early intervention programmes and
3. Continue efforts to ensure that children with mental health difficulties benefit from specific services designed for children under 18 years of age

The full report of the UN Committee's concluding observations on Ireland can be found [here](#).