

Submission Template

Feedback for National Disability Authority Strategic Plan 2016 – 2018

Introduction

The National Disability Authority (NDA) is the state body set up by law to advise the Government on disability policy and practice, and to promote Universal Design – the design of places, products services and technology that can be accessed, used and understood by everyone, regardless of age, size ability or disability.

Our remit covers

- Research
- Policy analysis and advice
- Standards development
- Developing Codes of Practice, and monitoring how they are implemented
- Promotion of universal design

We provide independent advice to Ministers and civil servants, participate in advisory and working groups, publish research, technical and practical guidelines, produce research reports, technical and practical guidelines and toolkits, and hold roundtables and seminars to develop and disseminate our advice and findings. Our work is based on research evidence and on the lived experience of people with disabilities.

Your views on our Strategic Plan 2016-2018

We would like to consult you on our Strategic Plan 2016-2018, which will be approved by the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Where should focus be up to 2018?

a. What themes and issues are likely to be major priorities for your organization's members up to 2018?

Mental Health Reform is a national coalition of 50 organizations. It advocates for improved mental health services and supports in Ireland. Mental Health Reform's vision is of an Ireland where people experiencing mental health difficulties can recover their well-being and live a full life in their community. Mental Health Reform's priorities/ strategic outcomes for the next few years, include:

- The Government ensures high quality community based, primary care and specialist mental health services are available and accessible to everyone in Ireland
- The Government and HSE ensure a transformed system for governance and accountability
- Government improves the social inclusion of people with mental health difficulties
- The espoused values and principles of A Vision for Change exemplified by citizenship, partnership, recovery and respect underpin mental health service delivery in Ireland
- Government ensures that children and adolescents have adequate, prompt access to a range of mental health supports to promote their mental wellbeing and address mental health difficulties at an early stage

Mental Health Reform provides the chair and secretariat of the national Children’s Mental Health Coalition. The Coalition’s key objectives include:

- Coherent policy is developed and implemented to meet the particular mental health and emotional needs of children in the youth justice system, children in the care system as well as other particularly vulnerable children
- Implementation of the national guidelines on mental health promotion and well-being for both primary and post primary schools
- The mental health needs of all children are met, including through the delivery of the full complement of child and adolescent community mental health teams promised under *A Vision for Change* so that no child is denied timely access to such teams

b. What themes, where it can add value, should the NDA prioritize in its work up to 2018?

Mental Health Reform is of the view that the NDA’s strategic plan 2016- 2018 should commit to the following:

Issue	Rationale
<p>The NDA’s draft strategic plan commits to promoting the employment of people with a disability. The NDA should ensure that its work on employment includes people with a mental health disability and should undertake specific work on improving the employment outcomes of people with a mental health disability.</p>	<p>People with mental health difficulties in Ireland are nine times more likely to be out of the labour force than those of working age without a disability, the highest rate for any disability group. Furthermore, half of adults with a mental health difficulty who are not at work say they would be interested in starting employment if the circumstances were right. Challenges for people with a mental health difficulty include ineffective links between mental health and supported employment services, concerns around the flexibility of welfare benefits, as well as the prejudice and discrimination surrounding mental health difficulties in work environments.</p> <p>The NDA could usefully provide guidance to the Department of Social Protection on how to improve its activation supports so that they fit with the recovery ethos and international good practice.</p>

<p>Advise government on how to provide adequate income supports for people with a disability, including people with a mental health difficulty</p>	<p>A significant component of income adequacy for people with a mental health disability is rent supplement/housing assistance payment. The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission found that: One of the biggest obstacles in the lives of people with mental health difficulties is the absence of adequate, affordable and secure accommodation. Despite the importance placed on the provision of adequate housing support it is evident that people residing in Ireland with long-term mental health difficulties, who are on disability or illness benefits are under severe economic strain due to social welfare and related cuts. This is further compounded by the inadequacy of rent supplement compared to escalating rents. The additional stress put on people with disabilities due to the lack of recognition of the impact of the housing crisis on those on rent supplement with a disability is likely to have negatively impacted on their mental health.</p> <p>Generally, people with a mental health disability tend to be concerned about the ability to return to benefits when they need to after becoming unwell. The NDA could usefully develop guidance on how social welfare benefits can be made more flexible to fit in line with the recovery principle in A Vision for Change so that they foster individuals' recovery and enable people to return to benefits when their mental health is deteriorating. People with a mental health disability also need to be able to pay for alternative treatments that are not currently funded by the mental health services.</p>
<p>The NDA should prioritize research and policy advice on improving the outcomes for children at risk of developing a mental health disability.</p>	<p>According to the Royal College of Surgeon's epidemiology research study on the mental health of young people in Ireland, 15.4 % of children aged 11-13 and 19.5% of young adults aged 19-24 have a mental health disorder. Furthermore, 75% of mental health difficulties arise before age 25.</p> <p>The NDA should advise on early intervention strategies to prevent mental health disability.</p>
<p>Advise government on the introduction of amending legislation to improve the human rights protections for people receiving inpatient mental health treatment under both civil and criminal law, in line with the CRPD.</p>	<p>It is widely accepted that current mental health legislation is out of line with international human rights law.</p> <p>The NDA could usefully add its voice to those advising Government on the need to amend the legislation in light of the CRPD. It will be important for the NDA to consult with people with mental health disabilities and mental health organizations to ensure that its advice is in keeping with their recommendations.</p>

<p>Advise government on how to effectively meet the housing needs of people with a disability, and particularly people with a mental health difficulty, in order to prevent homelessness and enable recovery.</p> <p><u>Furthermore</u>, there has been slow progress at moving people out of HSE-run mental health community residences. This issue should be addressed as a matter of priority</p>	<p>People with mental health difficulties are at a significantly high risk of becoming homeless. Please see above.</p>
<p>Advise government on how to establish a funding stream for tenancy sustainment support for people with mental health difficulties transitioning from institutional or health-service run residences to community living.</p>	<p>An on-going difficulty in preventing homelessness and promoting deinstitutionalization is the lack of a dedicated funding stream to provide medium and long-term tenancy sustainment support to individuals with long-term mental health difficulties. The Implementation Framework for the National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities recognizes that the HSE will be required to continue to provide health and personal social services for people transitioning from mental health service accommodation.</p> <p>The HSE's recently published guidance paper Addressing the Housing Needs of People using Mental Health Services illustrates a range of housing and housing support models currently in operation which emphasize and underpin the requirement for tenancy sustainment support for those transitioning from mental health service accommodation.</p>
<p>Develop advice on the ongoing rehabilitation and social integration supports needed for people with a mental health disability.</p>	<p>A Vision for Change recommended that a strong commitment to the principle of 'Recovery' should underpin the work of the rehabilitation community mental health teams - the belief that it is possible for all service users to achieve control over their lives, to recover their self-esteem, and move towards building a life where they experience a sense of belonging and participation.</p> <p>The Community Employment Strategy includes a priority to promote job retention and re-entry into work through the recovery model of rehabilitation. Specifically, the Strategy will 'promote and support the role of work in the <i>Recovery Model</i> of rehabilitation, including co-ordinated support for employers and employees at local level by job coaches and community health teams...and through the establishment of a national rehabilitation service'.</p>

<p>Promote the implementation of advocacy services for people with disabilities, including people with mental health difficulties.</p>	<p>The Irish Advocacy Service (IAN) offers advocacy supports in every part of the country, with the exception of Donegal. However, IAN generally provides advocacy supports to people in mental health inpatient units. MHR is of the view that there are numerous individuals living in the community with mental health difficulties that require advocacy supports.</p> <p>The Citizen’s Information Board provides advocacy support for people with mental health difficulties through its National Advocacy Service (NAS). However, NAS, in its limited capacity, focuses on providing supports to people with acute, complex mental health needs.</p>
<p>Advise the government on how to meet the mental health needs of people with co-morbid mental health difficulties and ID. The NDA should also advise the government on how to meet the mental health needs of people from the deaf community with mental health difficulties.</p>	<p>Specialist services within the mental health services have received the least development over the past 9 years, further marginalizing already disadvantaged groups including people with an intellectual disability and those who are deaf, both of which groups are at very high risk of developing a mental health difficulty.</p> <p>There are currently just 13 posts allocated to MHID in adult mental health services. Approximately 300 posts were recommended in AVFC. Furthermore, there are currently no dedicated MHID staff or teams in CAMHS.</p>

c. Any other comments

The NDA should consider the inequalities within disabilities, including issues of gender inequality, class, ethnic minority status, sexual orientation and age.

The substantial shift from an institutionalized to a community based model of mental health service delivery has been achieved; however, there is are new risks to people with mental health difficulties living in the community including social isolation, vulnerability to abuse, loneliness, fragmentation of their supports and difficulties in accessing their supports. The NDA should highlight these new risks and develop policy advice regarding same.

The NDA should re-run its research on stigma and discrimination through its public attitudes survey which has been a very valuable evidence base.

The NDA should ensure that when it is conducting research on people with disabilities that it includes people with mental health disabilities.

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Type of organization: NGO
Date: 4th March 2015

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