

## **Launch of the Irish Institute of Mental Health Nursing 17<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

Ladies and gentlemen, invited guests, on behalf of the interim executive I am delighted to welcome you here today to the launch of the Irish Institute for Mental health Nursing.

I have the honour of being the interim inaugural Chairperson of the Institute.

I would firstly like to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation to all of you for coming along, especially Ms Sheila O'Malley Chief Nurse in the Department of Health and Children, Mr Eugene Donaghue from An Bord Altranais, Ms Patricia Gilheaney from the Mental Health Commission, Ms Mary Farrelly from the National Council for Nursing and Midwifery and our colleagues from the various staff organisations.

I would also like to thank the Minister for State, Mr John Moloney for agreeing to launch the Institute, and he will be along later.

A special thanks to all the speakers, Prof Patrick Callaghan, Prof of Mental Health Nursing, Nottingham University; Mr Martin Rogan, and Ms Mary Farrelly, Mr John Redican CEO of the National Service Users Executive and Mr Colum Bracken who will speak to us later.

I would also like to pay tribute to the work of all my colleagues that have contributed to getting us to this launch today

Getting us to this day has been a fair time coming, for the past year a number of people have been working hard to bring the institute to this embryonic stage of development, and I say embryonic as we are at the very early stages of development. The success of the institute will from here on depend on us all assuming collective responsibility for moving forward.

As we all know good mental health is vital to our social, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. However, mental health problems represent one of the major public health challenges facing not only us here in Ireland but across the globe.

The number of people around the world experiencing poor mental health is increasing. The World Health Organisation estimates that 25 per cent of the world's population will at some time in their lives experience a mental health problem, and that mental health problems are one of the leading causes of disability globally.

Addressing the many facets of mental health is a complex issues for governments the world over. Similar to mental health services in other European countries, the Mental Health Services in Ireland are also grappling with these challenges, in an attempt to modernise mental health service provision, and provide services that are responsive, flexible and appropriate.

The Interim Executive have considered this issue and collectively we support the notion of services being responsive, flexible and appropriate. We consider these as necessary ingredients in quality health service provision, but we would also believe that the provision of proactive

rather than reactive services needs urgent attention, as we cannot claim to offer holistic services if we fail to adequately consider the domains of health promotion and illness prevention as well as the provision of services to those experiencing mental health problems or distress, which is where traditionally our efforts have been directed.

In that regard, the '*Vision for Change: Report of the expert group on Mental Health Policy*' which was launched in January 2006, signaled a new era in the provision of mental health care in Ireland. It also highlighted the need to develop a holistic, seamless, socially inclusive, recovery and empowerment oriented service. Prominence was also placed on future services moving away from institutional care and the dominance of the medical concept of mental health, to a service that addresses the biological, psychological and social factors that contribute to mental health problems, in the context of the best available evidence and interdisciplinary working.

Within the report special emphasis was also given to the need to foster active partnerships between service users/carers and professionals at every level of service provision. *The Quality Framework for Mental Health Services in Ireland* published by the Mental Health Commission (2007) reiterates many of these principles. Achieving this vision for quality mental health services will not be an easy task as attitudes and institutional practice have been ingrained over many decades

Mental Health nurses remain the largest staff group involved in the provision of mental health care and the Irish Institute of Mental Health Nursing represents the coming together of people from clinical practice, management, education and research in the task of promoting excellence in the provision of quality Mental Health Nursing and mental health service delivery, as identified in the vision for change and the quality framework.

### **So what can and will the Irish Institute of mental Health Nursing do?**

It is a belief of the founding members of the institute that mental health nursing serves an essential function within a modern health system and society and good quality mental health nursing, that respects the dignity, rights, voice and uniqueness of people who experience mental distress can be central to the persons recovery and wellbeing.

Our vision is to promote excellence in the provision of quality Mental Health Nursing and mental health service delivery, within the context of a multidisciplinary approach, both in Ireland and internationally. As far back as 1952 Hildigard Peplau outlined the central role of psychiatric/mental health nursing in mental health care. In the intervening period of over half a century it could be said that some of the noble aims and therapeutic potential of nursing, as envisioned by Peplau have not always been realized.

We see the Institute as being a purely a professional organization, which will assist in clarifying and promoting collective values that must underpin quality mental health nursing practice. It is important that we engage people in articulating these values and build support for a service that promotes mental health, respects the right of people experiencing mental health problems, and fosters the development of a socially inclusive, recovery and empowerment oriented service. In so doing the institute will also seek to form and extend partnerships with service users to achieve

the ultimate aim of developing and protecting the mental health and the wellbeing of our communities.

The Institute of Mental Health Nursing will play a central leadership role in bringing together a critical mass of mental health nurses from practice, education and research in order to move this agenda forward. The synergies created between nurses from practice, education and research in partnership with service users groups and other appropriate stakeholder groups will not only help develop shared values but will challenge many professional orthodoxies.

Our vision is to be a collective critical voice for Mental Health Nursing that contributes at a local, national and international level to policy development on matters relevant to mental health nursing practice, mental health nursing education and mental health service development. As said mental health nurses are the largest staff group involved in the provision of mental health care and there is a need to harness the collective wisdom of the group in shaping policy and practice.

In fulfilling the aims and objectives of the Institute, it is important that a space for open dialogue and difference of opinion is created, for it is out of the celebration of difference that true progress will be made. It is also important that the Institute maintains a commitment to articulating a collective and cohesive voice for mental health nursing and not become the captive of any particular group, while simultaneously celebrating and accommodating diversity.

The foundation on which the Institute is built must be firstly, one of recognition of the centrality of the person who experiences mental health problems and their carers to all of mental health nursing endeavors, for it is quality of care to service users and carers that is the *raison d'être* of both mental health nursing and of course, the institute.

Secondly, the institute must also recognise the legitimacy of all people involved in mental health nursing: be they clinical nurses, clinical nurse specialists or advanced nurse practitioners, educators, nursing students, researchers or nurses within managerial roles.

I am highly optimistic that the launch of the new Institute will usher in a new era of improvement in mental health nursing care locally and nationally. If the number of good wishes we have received from individuals and organisation within Ireland and Internationally is anything to go by, then the future for the development of a strong professional voice for mental health nursing in Ireland is indeed bright.

At times over the past year, we wondered if we were building castles in the air, but as Henry David Thoreau said 'If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.' And today is not just about the launch but also about putting the foundations in place, through the formation of the first executive to move the agenda forward.

As I said at the outset the success of the institute will depend on us all assuming collective responsibility for moving the profession forward, so I hope that by then end of the day we will

have sufficient volunteers to form the first executive, with others demonstrating willingness to get involved in working groups.

Martin Luther King in his famous speech talked about the 'fierce urgency of Now'. There is no doubt that the global increase in mental health problems means there are big challenges facing all of us, and mental health nursing can and will make an essential contribution to the development and delivery of a modern mental health system. The improvements required in mental health service provision will not happen by chance, it is a matter of choice and action, our choices and our actions.

While not having Mr Kings oratory skills I am happy to steal his words, and say it would be fatal for us as mental health nurse 'to overlook the urgency of the moment'. The Irish Institute of Mental Health Nursing is committed to promoting excellence in the provision of quality Mental Health Nursing and mental health service delivery, and the interim executive would like your help and assistance. We are confident that we will collectively succeed and hugely encouraged by the number of people who have turned out today and we want to thank you for that. Let the journey begin!

Thank you  
Agnes