

**Address by Mr John Moloney T.D., Minister for
Equality, Disability and Mental Health at the
presentation of Submission by the Psychological
Therapies Forum regarding Statutory Registration
of Counsellors & Psychotherapists in Ireland**

23rd September 2008

Introduction

I am very pleased to be here this afternoon to receive the submission from the Psychological Therapies Forum regarding the Statutory Registration of Counsellors and Psychotherapists in Ireland. I would like to thank the members of the Forum, for their dedication and commitment to the work involved in preparing this submission.

Background

As you may be aware, the Health and Social Care Professionals Act was passed by the Oireachtas in 2005. The Act provides for the inclusion of professions to a system of statutory registration and provides a framework to guide future decisions in this regard.

As a first step in the implementation of the system of statutory registration, the Health and Social Care Professionals Council was established by the Minister for Health and Children in March of last year. The Council has now recruited a Chief Executive Officer and is currently putting in place a suitable organisational structure. The Council is currently working to put in place the necessary structures for

registration, education and fitness to practise for the twelve health and social care professions designated in the Act. The Council will examine which professions from within the designated twelve are most suitable for early registration and it is hoped to have two registration boards established by end-2008.

Criteria for Inclusion within Statutory Registration

The criteria used to define a health or social care profession in the Act includes any profession in which a person exercises skill or judgment relating to preservation or improvement of the health or wellbeing of others, the resolution, through guidance, counselling or otherwise, of personal, social or psychological problems and the care of those in need of protection, guidance or support.

The factors used to consider the inclusion of professions to the system of statutory registration include the extent to which the profession has established itself, including whether there is at least one professional body representing a significant proportion of the profession's practitioners; the existence of defined routes of entry into the profession and of independently assessed qualifications; the profession's commitment to continuing professional development.

Until such time as the Health and Social Care Professionals Council has the structures in place to progress the establishment of the registration boards, it is advisable and strongly encouraged for all relevant professional bodies to continue to collaborate in order to strengthen self-regulation in the interim.

'A Vision for Change' - the Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy.

Access to existing services provided by Counsellors and Psychotherapists is usually through primary healthcare, through mental health services, voluntary agencies and private practitioners. As Minister of State with specific responsibility for mental health issues, I have a keen interest in all issues relating to mental health including the process of counselling and psychotherapy. The Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, '*A Vision for Change*', which was launched in January 2006, provides a framework for action to develop a modern, high quality mental health service over a seven to ten year period. The Government has accepted the Report as the basis for the future development of our mental health services.

A Vision for Change builds on the approaches to mental health service provision proposed in previous policy documents. It proposes a holistic view of mental illness and recommends an integrated multidisciplinary approach to addressing the biological, psychological and social factors that contribute to mental health problems. It proposes a person-centred treatment approach which addresses each of these elements through an integrated care plan, reflecting best practice, and evolved and agreed with service users and their carers. Special emphasis is given to the need to involve service users and their families and carers at every level of service provision. Interventions should be aimed at

maximising recovery from mental illness, and building on the resources within service users and within their immediate social networks to allow them to achieve meaningful integration and participation in community life.

It is in this context that the need for greater access to psychological or ‘talk’ therapies should be examined. Increasing demand for psychological and social therapies in recent years, among users and service providers, indicates a valuable and important component of basic mental health services.

Conclusion

I welcome the submission on Statutory Registration of Counsellors & Psychotherapists in Ireland as a valuable document to help inform future discussions and decision making regarding the inclusion of further health and social care profession within Statutory Registration. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Psychological Therapies Forum again for their time and resources in the preparation of the information contained in their submission.