

*From: Professor David R Bamford
Chairman*

**The Review of Mental Health &
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Dear Colleague

**THE REVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING DISABILITY
(NORTHERN IRELAND)**

A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ADULT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Introduction

I am writing to ask for your comments on the Review's first draft report entitled, "A Strategic Framework for Adult Mental Health Services".

Background

As you may know, I chair the current Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability in Northern Ireland, which commenced in October 2002. The Review is managed by a Steering Committee, which oversees the detailed work of 10 Expert Working Committees, each examining specific areas and issues, on which they will report at various times through to mid 2005.

The attached draft report, endorsed by the Steering Committee, represents the first product from the Review. It is the result of over a year's work by the Adult Mental Health Working Committee, convened by Professor Roy McClelland of Queen's University, who is also Deputy Chair of the Review. This work has included extensive informal consultation with stakeholders since late last year, including the contributions of users of services and their carers.

Strategic Framework

The draft report sets out a new Strategic Framework for Adult Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland for the next 15-20 years. Highlighting that there is insufficient investment in community services, leading to an inappropriate over-reliance on hospital services, the draft report makes recommendations covering the need for:

- better community and primary care for people presenting with a mental health problem;
- improved team working in community mental health services;
- improved services for those experiencing a crisis, with these services acting as a gatekeeper to hospital services;
- the siting and quality of hospital provision;
- promotion of recovery and rehabilitation services to ensure people do not remain in hospital unnecessarily; and
- assertive outreach teams for those who remain vulnerable in the community.

In addition, the report considers the specific needs of a number of vulnerable groups, such as people with eating disorders, people with brain disease or injury and people with personality disorders, where services are poorly developed. The report also makes recommendations about wider issues, which affect the lives of people with mental health problems, such as education, employment, housing and Social Security benefits.

Consultation

We are anxious to hear your views on this draft report and its proposals. In responding, it would be particularly helpful if you linked your comments to specific chapters, paragraphs and recommendations. The document has been issued to a wide range of key interests and stakeholders and been placed on the Review's website (www.rmhdni.gov.uk).

We would ask for your comments on the report **by Friday 27 August 2004, at the latest**. These should be sent by post, fax or email to Michael Kelly at the above address (tel no: 028 90 522067. email: Michael.Kelly3@dhsspsni.gov.uk).

We look forward to receiving your views, which will be fully considered in finalising this report after the Summer.

Yours sincerely

D.R Bamford

David R Bamford (Professor)

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