

*From: Professor David R Bamford
Chairman*

**The Review of Mental Health &
Learning Disability (NI)**

**Room 9, Annex 6
Castle Buildings
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST. BT4 3PP**

Phone: 028 9052 3487

Fax: 028 9052 3482

Email: david.bamford@dhsspsni.gov.uk

5 October 2005

Dear Colleague

MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION – A PERSONAL, PUBLIC & POLITICAL ISSUE

Introduction

I am writing to ask for your comments on the Review's draft report entitled, "Mental Health Promotion – A Personal, Public & Political Issue".

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 early 2006.

The attached draft report, endorsed by the Steering Committee, represents the fourth product from the Review. It is the result of over a year's work by the Mental Health Promotion Expert Working Committee, convened by Professor Alan Ferguson, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health. This work has included extensive informal consultation with stakeholders since late last year, including the contributions of users of services and their carers.

Vision

The Mental Health Promotion Expert Working Committee wants to see a recognition at all levels in Northern Ireland:

- that everyone has mental health needs;
- that mental well-being underpins all health and well-being;
- that mental health, like physical health, is a resource to be protected and promoted;
- and
- that mental health promotion strategies and practice are in keeping with human rights and equality legislation.

We also want to see a society where everyone plays a role in and takes action to create an environment that promotes the mental health and well-being of individuals, families, organisations and communities.

This is particularly important in Northern Ireland, where social capital in many communities has been destroyed due to the legacy of 30 years of conflict. Communities need to grow and develop, enhancing levels of trust, sense of belonging and participation to promote emotional well-being. Although some progress has been made towards this vision, much still needs to be achieved.

Priorities for Promoting Mental Health in Northern Ireland

In reviewing progress on mental health promotion in Northern Ireland, the following areas have emerged as crucial to achieving effective delivery:

- prioritisation of key risk groups;
- capacity building;
- research;
- co-ordination;
- cross-sector partnership and working;
- compliance with equality and human rights legislation;
- dedicated resources, both additional and with a realignment or reconfiguration of existing resources to facilitate mental health promotion and prevention.

Primary Recommendation – Creation of a Regional Mental Health/Promotion Directorate

In order to achieve strategic, co-ordinated, cross-sectoral and multi-agency action on mental health promotion, the Working Committee is recommending that a Regional Mental Health Promotion Directorate, with a Regional Director, should be established and sited within that section of DHSSPS which has responsibility for mental health and disability; not part of a generic health promotion structure. A properly resourced Directorate would increase awareness and visibility of mental health promotion, facilitate the achievement of existing mental health promotion targets, as well as set targets for the future. This would provide a necessary degree of permanence, leadership and sustainability to drive forward mental health promotion in Northern Ireland, whilst creating ownership of mental health promotion across all sectors and relevant agencies and groups.

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 2 December 2005, at the latest**. These should be sent by post, fax or email to Stephen Brown at the above address (tel no: 028 90 523470. email: stephen.brown@dhsspsni.gov.uk).

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

Yours sincerely

D.R. Bamford

David R Bamford (Professor)

Enc.