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Deputy Secretary
Primary, Secondary & Community Care Group



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

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Chief Executives of HSS Boards
Chief Executives of HSS Trusts

Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Date: 13 March 2006

Dear Colleague

UNDER 18 YEAR OLDS IN ADULT MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

The accommodation of young people in adult inpatient mental health facilities is an ongoing issue of concern. Lord Rooker, the Minister for Children and Young People, has stated that young people should not be accommodated in adult mental health wards. It is recognised however that until the new permanent adolescent inpatient unit is opened there will be severe restrictions on inpatient capacity. This guidance sets out how effect should be given to Lord Rooker's statement and in doing so it distinguishes between general mental health ward accommodation and separate accommodation in side rooms in adult mental health facilities.

In meeting the needs of young people with Mental Health problems, Trusts and Boards should:

1. ensure prompt response by community CAMHS teams to those young people at risk of admission to inpatient facilities and thus prevent avoidable admissions;
2. access the temporary inpatient unit at Knockbracken, when this becomes available in the near future;
3. where this is not possible, access to adult mental health facilities should be restricted to separate, side room accommodation (not adult general wards) with appropriate supervision according to assessed risk;
4. provide appropriate in-reach support to individual young people by local CAMHS professionals to assist the management of young people and, where possible, facilitate training opportunities for adult mental health staff in relation to child and adolescent mental health, including use of secondments;
5. facilitate early discharge of adolescents from inpatient facilities, with provision of appropriate care packages in the community; and

6. for young people who may require inpatient care for prolonged periods, proactively consider transfer to appropriate specialist adolescent inpatient units elsewhere.

Yours sincerely



ANDREW HAMILTON