**Submission to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission on its Strategy Statement 2019-2021**

**October 2018**



St. Patrick’s Mental Health Services (SPMHS) is Ireland’s largest independent, not-for-profit mental health service provider. St. Patrick’s Mental Health Services’ vision is a society where all citizens are given the opportunity to live mentally healthy lives. SPMHS works to provide the highest quality mental healthcare, to promote mental wellbeing and mental health awareness, and to advocate for the rights of those experiencing mental health difficulties. SPMHS achieves this through a human rights-based approach, through the enhancement of evidence-based knowledge, and by striving to be at the cutting edge of new initiatives and advances in the field. SPMHS is committed to furthering the development of the competencies of those choosing to work in mental health and of the organisations providing mental health care services, and to enhancing partnership with service users. Our strategic plan for 2018-2022 – [‘Changing Minds. Changing Lives’](https://www.stpatricks.ie/about-us/changing-minds-changing-lives), is firmly rooted in these principles and commitments.

SPMHS welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission’s (IHREC) consultation on its second Strategy Statement 2019-2021. SPMHS recognises the essential role IHREC plays as Ireland’s national human rights and equality institution, and is fully supportive of IHREC’s vision of “an inclusive Ireland where human rights and equality are respected, protected and fulfilled for everyone, everywhere”[[1]](#endnote-1).

This submission will focus on the human rights and mental health perspective, and on the significance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) over the period of the Strategy Statement, and the importance of cultivating further partnerships and collaboration to achieve shared aims in relation to strengthening human rights in Ireland.

**The UNCRPD**

SPMHS recognises that a key goal of IHREC relates to ‘pro-active implementation’

of your legal power, ‘in particular public duty’, and the necessity to maintain implementation of the CRPD as a core task of your second Strategy Statement.

SPMHS welcomed the ratification of the UNCRPD earlier this year, and acknowledges there will likely be a focus on the implementation of the CRPD over the period of the Strategy. We would highlight the need for the voices of those with mental health difficulties and other stakeholders such as service providers to be heard and included within this work. SPMHS recognise that IHREC has an essential role to play in ensuring that the legislative and practice requirements needed to achieve compliance with the CRPD are achieved, and in the shortest time possible. SPMHS believes that a collaborative and cooperative approach with all stakeholders will be key to achieving this aim.

In this regard SPMHS further highlight the relevance of Goal 4 and 5 of IHREC’s first Strategy Statement (promoting best practice and standards of human rights and equality education and active engagement with diverse groups in society respectively), in order to promote and support mental health services that are grounded in human rights, and to ensure key participation of people with mental health difficulties.

**Strengthening working partnerships and collaboration**

SPMHS commends the consultative approach espoused by the work of IHREC while acknowledging its status as a necessarily independent body. We believe that strategic collaborations and partnerships are essential to achieving shared aims and fulfilling our duties and commitment as an organisation rooted in a human rights ethos, and to ensure that the rights of those experiencing mental health difficulties are enjoyed and protected. We believe that a more diverse range of consultations which could include specific expert forums, subject specific fora and/or expert groups would be beneficial to achieving IHREC’s aims and objectives. A focus on engaging in effective partnerships where possible should continue to be reflected within the second Strategy Statement and we acknowledge the relevance of pluralism as regards mental health and human rights matters.

**Summary**

SPMHS fully supports and commends IHREC’s vision and work towards an inclusive Ireland based on human rights and equality. SPMHS’s own strategy for the coming years – Changing Minds. Changing Lives, is firmly aligned with the principle of human rights as the basis for our work and ethos. With regard to IHREC’s second Strategy Statement 2019-2021, SPMHS highlight the significance of the implementation of the CRPD as a key and urgent focus presently, and the necessity of including the perspectives of those with mental health difficulties, and engaging with stakeholders including mental health services. SPMHS believe that in addition to consultation, strategic collaboration and partnership are essential to achieving shared aims. SPMHS are committed and eager to participate in any opportunities to support and contribute to IHREC’s work, in particular as regards the CRPD.

**END**

1. Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2016) *Strategy Statement 2016-2018.* (p.4) IHREC, Dublin [↑](#endnote-ref-1)