



St. Patrick's Mental Health Service
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Submission to the Department of Justice and Equality
Integration Unit
Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration
Bishop's Square
Redmond's Hill
Dublin 2

relating to

CERD Combined 5th 6th 7th Periodic Report Ireland Draft

St. Patrick's Mental Health Services' vision is a society where all citizens are given the opportunity to live mentally healthy lives. St. Patrick's Mental Health Services (SPMHS) works to provide the highest quality mental health care, to promote mentally healthy living and mental health awareness, to advocate for the rights of those experiencing mental health difficulties, to support the investigation into and the enhancement of evidence-based knowledge and to develop the competencies of those committing to work in mental health and the organisations providing mental health care.

St. Patrick's Mental Health Services welcomes Ireland's report to the United Nation's Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, particularly as it relates to the mental health of travellers and migrant populations. SPMHS has developed a level of expertise in relation to travellers' mental health, through its work with Exchange House Ireland, an organization that has over 35 years of experience in providing professional frontline family support, crisis intervention, education, training and services for travellers in Ireland. This submission limits itself to commentary on the report relating to mental health.

SPMHS recognizes the changes in the economic, political and social landscape in the timeframe covered by the report. The legal recognition of travellers as an ethnic minority in 2017 and the introduction of strategies in the area of migrant integration, gender equality and traveller and Roma inclusion are particularly significant and are closely related to mental health care and treatment.

The inclusion in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021 of a commitment to increase efforts to ensure that travellers and Roma interact fully with the public health sector is to be welcomed. However, SPMHS has a continuing concern that, despite the additional once-off funding of approximately €500,000 that



was recently made available for traveller mental health, more needs to be done at a strategic and operational level, to ensure that the particular challenges faced by travellers, in relation to living mentally healthy lives, are addressed. In addition, comprehensive actions need to be taken to fundamentally address the challenges faced by travellers, relating to stigma around mental health and stigmatic attitudes towards travellers generally.

The UN Committee's concluding observations, in paragraph number 20, in relation to direct provision, have particular resonance for mental health and mental illness. The Committee notes that people living in direct provision can suffer health and psychological problems that in certain cases lead to serious mental illness. The Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, in its final report in June, 2015 states that "it is important that where an assessment identifies mental health issues or if issues arise at a later stage, that appropriate services are available to the person concerned. The working group heard that there is a perception of long waiting lists to access some mental health services. It was noted that not all mental health issues require psychiatric/medical mental health services. Where necessary, however, these should be easily accessible to residents who require them". St. Patrick's Mental Health Service agrees with the working group in relation to the need for prompt mental health services. SPMHS also shares its concern that there are long waiting lists for some such services. In addition, Vision for Change, the document that sets out Ireland's mental health policy, clearly identifies a strategic imperative to address the mental health needs of culturally diverse groups: "community development models of mental health are particularly useful in the provision of mental health services to culturally diverse groups. Services need to reach out actively to communities to find alternative paths to channel support to individuals and families." (p40) SPMHS agrees with this assertion that services need to reach out to culturally diverse communities.

The UN Committee's concluding observations welcomed the development of training for An Garda Síochána on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity (Diversity Works Programme). In addition, SPMHS welcomes the introduction of Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, which imposes a positive legal duty on public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. These are positive steps towards tackling racial discrimination in public bodies. SPMHS recommends that programmes, similar to An Garda Síochána 'Diversity Works' Programme, should be implemented within the health services and particularly within the mental health service, to ensure a human rights basis to the development and delivery of mental health services in Ireland.

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