

Royal College of Psychiatrists in Northern Ireland

Manifesto for the 2011 Northern Ireland Assembly Election



Mental health is a vote winning issue

1 in 4 voters will seek treatment for a mental health problem at some point in their life. A much higher proportion of constituents will have family members, colleagues or friends who need support.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists calls on Northern Ireland's political parties to give a high priority in the next Assembly to the promotion of mental well-being and the prevention and treatment of mental illness within a recovery ethos.

WE CALL ON YOU TO:

- Prevent harmful cuts to mental health services, and invest in modern services that promote recovery
- Commit to fair and just reform for mental capacity legislation
- Introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol
- Put mental health at the heart of public health policy



At least 1 in 4 people in Northern Ireland will have a mental health problem during their lifetime.

Independent economic research has shown that we have 25% higher mental health needs than England, but significantly less funding.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists believes that this election campaign is an important opportunity for candidates to champion mental health and for political parties to commit to taking action when in Government.

Mental health does not get a fair deal. Despite recent improvements on measures of funding, quality and access, mental health services are still poorer than physical health services. At a time of greater need, the economic downturn is already threatening services, and promised psychotherapy and personality disorder services have been scaled back.

College research has shown that there has never been a worse time – in the midst of a recession which is already leading to more mental ill health – to cut services. Spending less will mean greater human, social and economic costs now and in the future.

Our four-step manifesto presents a clear plan of action for the next Government. Northern Ireland has the opportunity to introduce ground-breaking legislation and be the first UK jurisdiction to tackle alcohol problems through minimum pricing. We should be pushing for world-class mental health services too. And we need to put mental health at the heart of public health – there is no health without mental health.

Mental health is a vote-winning issue. Speak up for your constituents who need your support.

Dr Philip McGarry
Chair
The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Northern Ireland



PREVENT HARMFUL CUTS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES and invest in modern services that promote recovery



There has never been a worse time to cut spending on mental health. The impact of the recession is not just economic; our research shows that it is also increasing the need for mental health services. Mental health need in Northern Ireland is at least 25% higher than in England, but we simply do not have the services to meet demand. We spend much less than England on mental health – just 7% of our health budget – and this is not enough.

Hospital capacity has been scaled back, but too often the savings have not been reinvested in community services that promote recovery and independent living. We look to politicians to increase investment in community mental health services and support ring fencing of the mental health social care budget.

Commitments to Psychological Therapies and to services for people with Personality Disorder have been scaled back. At the same time, England has increased investment in these treatments. It is vital that there is sufficient funding for evidence-based psychological therapies.

We call on you to fight for modern, safe mental health services that promote recovery.

COMMIT TO FAIR AND JUST REFORM FOR MENTAL CAPACITY LEGISLATION

Northern Ireland has taken the bold step to propose a world-first single Mental Capacity (Health, Welfare and Finance) Bill that will combine mental health legislation with capacity legislation. This will remove the stigmatising divide between mental health and physical health, and mean that anyone who is unable to make rational decisions will be treated in the same way.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists calls on all parties to support capacity law based on the Bamford principles of autonomy, justice, benefit and least harm.

Introduce a minimum unit price for **ALCOHOL**



In real terms the price of alcohol has more than halved since 1980; over that period consumption has doubled. As a consequence we are seeing much greater levels of severe liver disease and other physical conditions. Alcohol is involved in 50% of suicides and self-harm and is associated with homicide and much of the violence we see on our streets at night-time. Alcohol also leads to domestic violence and family trauma and breakdown. Along with other medical Royal Colleges, charities, community groups and responsible parts of the alcohol and hospitality industry, the College is convinced by the international research evidence on the key role of price, in particular the 'floor price' of the cheapest alcohol, in influencing rates of harm. This is why we support proposals for a minimum price for alcohol. Government regulation of alcohol is the most powerful factor in reducing the toll of avoidable early deaths.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists calls for all-party support for a minimum unit price for alcohol.

PUT MENTAL HEALTH AT THE HEART OF PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY

There can be no health without mental health. Mental health must be at the heart of the public health agenda, yet mental health remains a taboo, resulting in social exclusion and in turn creating further mental health problems.

Mental well-being must be on the agenda in every aspect of life, and particularly in schools.

We call for a cross-government programme to promote well-being and tackle stigma throughout society.

For further information please contact the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Northern Ireland.

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