



**Royal College of Psychiatrists NI (RCPsych NI) Response to:
The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Consultation on
Draft Strategic Plan 2025-2028**

1.0 Introduction about RCPsych NI:

The Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) is the statutory body responsible for the supervision of the training and accreditation of Psychiatrists in the UK and for providing guidelines and advice regarding the treatment, care, and prevention of mental and behavioural disorders. Among its principal aims are to improve the outcomes for those with mental illness and to improve the mental health of individuals, families and communities.

The College has approximately 450 Members in Northern Ireland (including Doctors in training) who provide the backbone of the local Psychiatric service, offering acute and community treatment, as well as specialist care and consultation across a large range of settings.

This response is submitted on behalf of the Devolved Council of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Northern Ireland.

2.0 Substantive Response/Comments:

We welcome the opportunity to comment on this draft Strategic Plan. This Plan has identified five very effective and important Strategic Objectives which we support. Unfortunately, what is totally missing from the Plan is the recognition of the Human Rights of people with a disability and specifically those with a mental health or learning disability. Given prevalence in Northern Ireland, this omission is deeply concerning.

People with a diagnosis of a mental illness or learning disability or problems with their mental health are often not in a position to advocate for themselves due to the nature of their illness or disability. Some may have the help of family, carers or supporters, but many do not. It is very important there is a recognition of the need for pro-active involvement in asserting and advocating for the Human Rights of these groups of people. This needs to be across the whole range of society, but specifically including their right to effective support and treatments

through the health service, occupational rehabilitation, jobs, independent living and appropriate housing, as well as advocates for their rights.

Strategic priorities 1, 2 and 4 especially apply to people with mental illness/ health and/or learning disabilities. The total lack of mention of people with these types of issues in the Strategic Plan adds further to the stigmatisation of these groups. Recognition of the need to pro-actively advocate for these groups should be embedded in the Plan and all organisations should be learning organisations as identified in the strategic objectives of this Plan.

The need for recognition of Human Rights for people who are emigrants or asylum seekers, whether legal or illegal, with a mental health or learning disability also needs to be identified and supported. These groups are particularly vulnerable in terms of having or developing serious mental illness and are often stigmatized and marginalized.

Whilst the draft Strategic Plan goes some way to establish ways in which data will be quantified and measured, the repetition of the word "instances" does not go far enough in being able to establish whether interventions are successful. We would be concerned that this relatively passive language does not sufficiently establish or uphold Human Rights and that this would need to be further clarified.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage with you in order to draw your attention to the imperative to focus within your objectives on these important and neglected aspects of Human Rights with a particular focus on the marginalized groups as mentioned.

Dated: 16th December 2024



**Dr Julie Anderson Chair RCPsych NI & Vice President RCPsych
- on behalf of RCPsych NI**

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