



## **Royal College of Psychiatrists NI (RCPsych NI) Response to: Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery Consultation on Equality Scheme 2022-2029**

### **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 440 members in Northern Ireland (including Doctors in training) who provide the backbone of the local Psychiatric service, offering inpatient, day patient and outpatient 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 General Comments:**

**We welcome the opportunity to comment on this Consultation. However, we must make clear as a professional Medical Royal College that we are not offering any comments whatsoever on the nature of the proposed legislation either in favour or against - and our Response should not be interpreted in any other way. We are offering comments solely on and limited to mental health aspects.**

**We acknowledge the importance of an Audit of Inequalities to ensure that the Commission in its work is meeting its responsibilities under the Equality Legislation and its responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. People with Mental Impairment may also be included under other section 75 categories, such as physical disability and others. This emphasises the complexity that an Audit faces, especially when addressing the combined categories. Combined categories need to be specifically addressed in the analysis.**

**The definition of Disability for Section 75 is taken from the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). This definition needs to be reviewed and broadened in its application to this legislation. The current definition is "a *physical or mental* impairment which has a *substantial and long-term***

***adverse effect on (a person's) ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". Many patients with Severe Mental Illness and Learning Disability will have long term effects of their condition. However, there are other Mental Disorders where the Patient may have a relapsing form of illness, being well for periods of time and not persistently ill for more than a year as the guide suggests as criteria.***

**Also, according to the DDA, to meet the definition of Disability there has to be an effect present in at least one of a number of respects, the vast majority being limitations in physical activity. Some of the symptoms leading to Disabilities and resulting from Severe Mental Illness, Organic Brain Disorder and Learning Disability are captured in these two DDA sections:**

- **memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; or**
- **perception of the risk of physical danger.**

**However, there are many *other* symptoms that need to be taken into account, such as lack of motivation and drive, thought disorder, abnormal behaviour, depression, panic attacks, recurrent intrusive thoughts, the relapsing nature of mental disorders and many others.**

**Dated: 10 May 2024**



**Dr Richard Wilson Chair RCPsych NI & Vice President RCPsych  
- on behalf of RCPsych NI**