

Royal College of Psychiatrists NI (RCPsych NI) Response to: DoH Request for Data to Inform DoH Audit of Inequalities

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 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 Substantive Response/Comments:

We are pleased that the Department of Health is going to carry out an "Audit of Inequalities" to identify inequalities across the various section 75 groups in the services provided by the Department of Health. We are also pleased to have been asked to participate in the provision of data to assist this process. We feel there are still too many inequalities with service provision for the Patients who attend Mental Health and Learning Disability Services, especially in comparison with Physical Health Care. We would also be keen to be involved in the results of the Audit and its use for the development of an Action Plan.

There are massive health inequalities experienced by people with a Learning Disability or Severe Mental Illness. On average people with these conditions die 15 to 20 years earlier than the rest of the population. The causes of death are considered to be avoidable with good quality health and social care.

The National Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) programme, the first of its kind in the world, was established following evidence from the University of Bristol led Confidential Inquiry into premature deaths of people with Learning Disabilities (CIPOLD). It demonstrates these huge disparities. We should have a similar reporting process in Northern Ireland.

A recent Scottish study showed that premature mortality was 12 times higher for children and young people with a Learning Disability. This demonstrates the health inequalities for people with a Learning Disability start at a very young age.

England has the LeDeR Programme and Scotland has the "Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory" for monitoring premature deaths. Northern Ireland needs to have a similar system also.

Our Patients fall under the Disability category, with Mental Impairment and across the whole age range. However, many of these Patients will also be included under other section 75 categories, such as physical disability, racial groups (especially asylum seekers and refugees), age and others. This emphasises the complexity that the Audit faces, especially when addressing the *combined categories*. In particular this needs to be addressed in Stage 4 of the process "Collate and analyse information disaggregated by Section 75 categories". Combined categories need to be specifically addressed.

The definition of Disability for Section 75 is taken from the Disability Discrimination Act NI (1995) (DDA). This definition needs to be reviewed and broadened in its application to this Audit. 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 eight 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 the two sections:

- **memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; or**
- **perception of 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, the relapsing nature of mental disorders and others.

3.0 Evidence:

We would also recommend the following reports:

1. **A Mentally Healthier Nation: Towards a ten year Cross government plan, for better Prevention , Equality and Support.(2023)** https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/better-mh-policy/policy/amentallyhealthiernation.pdf?sfvrsn=39a890c1_7

This report has been endorsed by nearly 60 organisations and was led by the Centre for Mental Health. There is a whole section on Equality with numerous citations of existing Inequalities.

2. **Mental health in Northern Ireland Fundamental facts (2023) Mental health Foundation and Office of the Mental Health Champion.** <https://www.mentalhealthchampion-ni.org.uk/files/mentalhealthchampionni/2023-10/Mental%20Health%20in%20MHF%20Northern%20Ireland%20Fundamental%20Facts%202023.pdf>

There is a whole section on “Tackling Inequalities”.

3. **Advancing Mental health Equality (2019) National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health.** <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/nccmh/amhe/amhe-appendices-and-helpful-resources.pdf>

The Appendices are particularly useful.

4. **Summary of Evidence on Public Mental health Interventions (2022) RCPsych and Public Mental health implementation Centre** https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/pmhc/summary-of-evidence-on-pmh-interventions-june-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=571f2858_4

This reviews Public Health interventions, with regard to Inequalities.

5. **The National Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) programme initially run by the University of Bristol, but now NHSE.**

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/improving-health/learning-from-lives-and-deaths/>

6. **Avoidable deaths in children and young people with Learning Disabilities in Scotland.** <https://www.sldo.ac.uk/our-research/determinants-of-health-and-inequalities-research/life-expectancy-and-mortality/avoidable-deaths-in-children-and-young-people-with-learning-disabilities-in-scotland/>

7. SLDO Explained: [Home | Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory \(sldo.ac.uk\)](https://www.sldo.ac.uk)

Dated: 14 February 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Wilson', with a horizontal line underneath it.

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

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