



Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

**The Irish Association for Counselling and
Psychotherapy (IACP) Opening Statement at the
Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Future of Mental
Health Care**

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February 7, 2018

Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) Opening Statement

Wednesday 7th February, 2018 @ 1.30 p.m.

Introduction by Mr. Ray Henry, IACP Cathaoirleach

The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) was established in 1981, to identify, develop and maintain standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy. Our work promotes best practice and development of the profession as well as protection of the public. We are the largest counselling and psychotherapy association in Ireland with over 4,500 members. IACP provides an important link between those who seek services and those who provide services. Our vision is one where counselling and psychotherapy are an integral part of healthcare provision.

The IACP would like to thank the Chair and members of the Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care for the invitation to reflect on the development of talking therapies as they relate to mental health.

The IACP representatives include:

- Myself, Mr. Ray Henry, Cathaoirleach
- Ms. Bernie Hackett, Leas Cathaoirleach
- Ms. Lisa Molloy, Chief Executive Officer
- Mr. Gary Culliton, Communications and Media Officer
- Ms. Iwona Blasi, Development & Innovation Manager
- Professor David Murphy, Nottingham University

I would now like to hand over to our Chief Executive Officer Ms. Lisa Molloy who will along with Professor Murphy, bring the committee through our opening statement.

Opening Statement by Ms. Lisa Molloy, IACP Chief Executive Officer and Professor David Murphy, Nottingham University

Good afternoon Chair and members, the IACP would like to acknowledge the work of the committee to date and welcomes and supports the increased focus on mental health and well-being. We fully endorse the integration of mental health services into the primary care sector and our accredited Counsellors and Psychotherapists have a key role to play in ensuring the success of this initiative.

One of the strongest messages to come out of the consultation that fed into 'A Vision for Change' was that people with poor mental health wanted alternatives to medication, including access to counselling and psychotherapy. (Department of Health, 2006, A Vision for Change, p.13, 61)

'A Vision for Change' also highlighted the under-development of our mental health services. One rural survey found that although one in three GP adult attendees presented with psychological distress, just 11% were in receipt of mental health services (Twomey, C. & Byrne, M. Forum 2012). According to the HSE, 54% of GPs in the North-East region said they would have preferred to have counselling available at their GP practice (HSE Working Group on Mental Health in Primary Care, 2006). The region identified a gap in availability of counselling, with many GPs reporting that they did not refer patients for counselling because of a lack of relevant counselling services, waiting lists

and cost. 'A Vision for Change' recommends the provision of an integrated, recovery-focused care delivered in the community, primarily by multidisciplinary teams. To date there has been slow progress in the implementation of this policy.

In this regard IACP propose that the State adopt a programme for the treatment of mild to moderate depression broadly modelled on the very successful initiative known as Counselling for Depression (CfD) in Britain. Members, you will have received a separate briefing which sets out the detail of this programme. In summary, this programme trains counsellors to provide a depression-specific therapy for individual clients within the National Health Service (NHS). Professor David Murphy who joins us from Nottingham University is an expert in this area and will speak in more detail to the Committee about the success of this programme in Britain.

Our UK equivalent, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) developed the programme at the request of the NHS following the introduction in Britain of the national 'Improving Access to Psychological Therapies' (IAPT) programme. This programme aims to make therapy free on the NHS for low-intensity mental illness, where previously medication was almost the only option. The IACP is proposing that an initiative similar to Counselling for Depression (CfD) be developed in Ireland and that the IACP would partner with the HSE in developing a tailor-made solution for the Irish system. The IACP strongly believes that there is a need for greater availability of evidence-based talking therapies for people with common mental health conditions, that are accessible via primary care services and general practice. Our members are ideally placed to deliver such evidence-based therapies which will serve to fill a clearly identified gap.

IACP also believes that access to counselling and psychotherapy services should be available on a universal basis to all those in need of such a service. One way to increase accessibility for the generality of the people in Ireland is to make the services more affordable. As an interim measure we request that serious consideration be given to expanding the existing supports which provide tax relief for medical expenses and a range of health-related benefits under the PRSI system, to include support for mental health services such as counselling and psychotherapy.

I would now like to hand over to Professor David Murphy who will speak to you about the Counselling for Depression (CfD) programme in Britain.