

The position of psychiatry in the Republic of Ireland, 1992

In response to a green paper issued by the Department of Health in Ireland in 1992, the Irish Division of the College produced a series of position statements on various aspects of psychiatry in Ireland. These statements were submitted to the Minister of Health in Ireland, together with the Division's detailed response to the proposals for new mental health legislation contained within the green paper.

The following summarises a report, ratified by Council, which is based on the various position statements produced by the Irish Division. This report provides an account of mental health services in the Republic of Ireland in 1992.

The first section of the report addresses the need for medical psychotherapy services in the Republic of Ireland, emphasising the relevance of psychotherapy to most areas of psychiatric practice.

The section of general adult psychiatry describes the concerns about inadequate funding and the absence of bridging finance as psychiatry moves out of the institution and into the community. Multi-disciplinary teams are more an aspiration than a reality, and the structure of health boards seem to discourage close links between different levels of care and involvement.

The report describes the present extent of service requirements in rehabilitation psychiatry, emphasising its importance as an essential component of psychiatric management. A great many teams, supposedly multidisciplinary, operate with only medical and nursing inputs, and the need for residential facilities greatly outweighs the provision. A number of recommendations have been put forward in an attempt to enhance the provision of resources and the quality of the service, and the need for continuing research is emphasised.

The section of the psychiatry of old age laments the lack of consultants and training opportunities that exist in the Republic of Ireland; it is only in recent

years that the need to develop services in this area has been recognised, and concerted action is required to facilitate development of this specialty.

Forensic psychiatry seems on the verge of a new and exciting future at its main base at the Central Mental Hospital at Dundrum. This service is funded by the Department of Health, but administered through the Eastern Health Board. There is an urgent need to divert illness from the criminal system into more appropriate care; and this is seen as an area of future development and participation.

Concerns relating to the implementation of aspects of the Child Care Act 1991 are outlined in the section on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. It is clear that Child Psychiatry should remain within the general body of psychiatry, rather than developing as a primary care service.

A comprehensive service is provided by the Eastern Health Board Drug Treatment Centre at Trinity Court, the main medically-directed advisory and treatment centre for substance misuse. The high admission rates for alcoholism among males, together with the emerging AIDS problem, are likely to ensure the involvement of psychiatrists in this area for some time.

A section of the report is devoted to the problems of the homeless mentally ill population, and the special programme established by the Eastern Health Board is endorsed.

Finally, the position of the psychiatry of mental handicap in the Republic of Ireland is outlined, and a number of recommendations put forward. Particular concerns exist regarding the continued need for specialist psychiatric units for the treatment of mental illness associated with mental handicap.

The full report is available from the College Publications Department (Reference CR23, price £2.50).

Guidelines for psychotherapy training as part of general professional training

These guidelines, which appeared in the November edition of the *Psychiatric Bulletin*, were approved by Council in June 1993 and are available from the

College Publications Department (Reference CR27, price £2.00).