



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

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AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

Let's talk Mental Health

A booklet for
people who are
using mental
health services



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Background

This booklet, the second in its series, has been produced for adults who are experiencing mental health difficulties. It is designed to offer you guidance on what to expect from Mental Health Services and to show how you can become more involved in the decisions about your care and treatment.

The booklet has benefited from the help of people who have experienced mental health problems and from those recovering from mental health problems. There has also been input from those caring for someone who has a mental health problem.

The booklet is based largely on the format of the previous 'Lets Talk' booklet but takes into consideration the reported experiences of those who have come in contact with mental health services.

Special thanks are due therefore to the design team for their input into this booklet. They included those mental health service users and carers along with the Health and Social Service Councils.

Background

The design team have worked in partnership with Health & Social Care staff including Mental Health professionals and members of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

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Clinical & Social Care Governance Support Team
June 2008

Introduction

Approximately one in four of us will experience a mental health problem at some point in our lives. It can affect anyone: men or women, rich or poor, young or old, and will have an impact on the lives of those people close to them.

Coping with a mental health problem is not easy, however if trust can be built between you and your mental health care team, a valuable partnership can develop.

This booklet aims to provide you with information so that you can have a better understanding of the choices you can make about your care and treatment.

By being better informed it can lead to you becoming more actively involved in your own care and

treatment and creating a genuine partnership between you and your caregiver.

Service users are increasingly being recognised as ‘experts by experience’ and have an important contribution to make in all aspects of service design and provision.

This booklet was written for service users, however you may find it may be of help to your relative, carer or a friend who is supporting you.

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So..... Why should you get actively involved?

We all have a part to play in developing effective mental health services. As a service user you can become more involved with the mental health service at a level that suits you.

You can

- **At a personal level** – become actively involved in your own mental health care and treatment.
- **At a delivery level** – service users or carers can be involved by giving feedback about the ways in which the mental health services are run.

- **At a monitoring level** – service users or carers can be involved in monitoring and reviewing the quality of services. You can contact the Health & Social Services Councils for further information – details at the back of this booklet.

- **At policy level** – service users and carers can be involved in developing local regional policies.

This booklet is about being involved at a personal level.

Points to Remember: You are entitled to be an active member in your mental health care.

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Coming into contact with Mental Health Professionals

You may meet a number of different mental health care professionals who in partnership with you, are there to support you during your care and treatment.

Whether it's your GP, Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Social Worker, Consultant, Pharmacist or others, this booklet will be of help to you when you want to ask questions about the care you are receiving.

Most people with mental health problems are cared for by their GP, some by the community mental health teams while others may need admission to a mental health unit.

You should expect to:

- **Be listened to, about your worries and concerns**
 - You have a right to ask questions and to expect answers that you can understand.... Don't be afraid to ask questions or to explain your worries. If you still don't understand, ask again.



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- **Be given the information about your care that allows you to make informed choices and to receive care that is based on your needs**
 - You should expect to receive information in a format which is clear and easy for you to understand. You should also expect to have access to your professional care-giver to explain anything you do not understand.
- **Be treated with respect and dignity**
 - You should be treated courteously with dignity, respect and sensitivity, irrespective of your age, ethnic origin, religious belief, race, gender, sexuality or disability.
- **Understand what you are giving your consent to**
 - You have the right to receive all relevant information before giving consent. You should be told about other options and for example, if there are any side effects of treatment before you give your consent. You might wish to discuss your options with your relative/carer/friend before consenting.
 - Make sure you understand the treatment or therapy you are being offered.
- **Have a relative/carer or friend with you if you want them to be there**
 - You may find support from a relative, carer or friend very beneficial

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and you may choose to have them accompany you to your appointments. You also have the right not to have family or carers present during these appointments.

- **Have access to the services of an independent advocate**
 - You may wish to have an independent advocate to act with you and/or

on your behalf. You may choose to bring your own independent advocate with you or you can ask about this service if you want to use it.

- **Discuss options around your ‘best interests’ if anytime in the future you are not able to make your own decisions**
 - You may wish to consider discussing



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beforehand and agreeing options for your future care and treatment. If you wish you may seek help and advice on this from your relative/carer/friend or advocate.

- **If you are not happy about your care or treatment you have the right to make a complaint**

- You may tell a senior member of staff about your concern or complaint or You can ask for a copy of the Health and Social Care Complaints Procedure which will tell you who to contact and how to make your complaint.

The following are health and social care professionals who have

expertise in mental health care, treatment and medications. They may work in the Community or in Mental Health Units

- General Practitioners (Family Doctor)
- Consultant Psychiatrists
- Clinical Psychologists
- Nurses – either hospital or community psychiatric nurses
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Pharmacists
- Social Workers
- Support Workers
- Mental Health Outpatient staff
- Day Centre staff
- Mental Health Unit staff
- Community Mental Health Care Team staff

Getting Help and Support

Your General Practitioner

Talking to someone about how you are feeling can be very difficult. The first health professional you speak to about your concerns may be your GP. This could be the first step you have taken in helping to understanding what is happening to you.

Points to Remember: You don't have to go to your GP alone..... bring someone along with you if you feel this is helpful.

Most people with mental health problems are cared for by their GP. Sometimes this may be in partnerships with community mental health teams and Psychiatrists for assessment and advice, or for treatment or therapies for example; specialist psychological therapies.



Getting Help and Support

Some suggestions about the kind of questions you may want to ask your GP, Psychiatrist and/or a professional from the Community Mental Health team.

Write down what you want to know about your problem, treatment or medication before your appointment. That way you won't forget to ask any questions. These are examples of a range of questions you might have.

- Why am I feeling this way?
- Can you tell me what you think is wrong?
- How sure are you that this is what is wrong with me?
- Do I need to have any tests done?
- Do I need to be referred to someone else who deals with this type of problem?
- Do you have any information about my condition that I can take home with me?
- Can you tell me about the full range of recommended treatments and/or therapies for this problem?
- Can you tell me where I can find out more information?
- Are there any support groups or self-help groups for this type of problem?
- Will I get better or how long will this problem last?
- Will I have to take medication and if so for how long?

Getting Help and Support

Points to Remember:

- **You should ask the doctor to repeat any difficult to understand information or the name of a condition or medication. Ask them to write it down so that you can refer to it later.**
- **You can have your relative/carer/friend with you, to do this for you.**
- **If you can't keep an appointment, let your GP/ Psychiatrist know as soon as you know and before your appointment is due.**
- **Find out who to contact if you need a doctor after the surgery closes, at weekends and public holidays.**
- **Ask how you can access the 'out of hours' service.**



Getting Help and Support

Specialist Psychological Therapies

You may be prescribed a range of treatments to help you cope with your mental health problem. These treatments are designed to give a holistic approach to care and to avoid the over-reliance on medication.

These treatments may be one to one counselling or different types of therapies. Some of these therapies may include:

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- Psychoanalytic Therapy
- Systemic and Family Therapy
- Counselling
- Addiction Services

Together with your GP/Psychiatrist or any member of the community team, you can make a joint decision about which therapy best suits your needs.

Remember to ask:

- **How will these therapies/counselling sessions be of benefit to me?**
- **How long will the sessions last?**
- **How many sessions will I need to attend?**
- **What if I don't attend?**
- **What alternative treatments I can get?**

Don't forget!

It is important that you keep your appointments for these treatments. You should discuss how they are helping

Getting Help and Support

or if they are not helping you with your GP, Psychiatrist or Nurse.

If you can't keep an appointment, let your GP/ Psychiatrist know as soon as you know and before your appointment is due. By respecting each other, trust will be built between you. This trust and respect should help to develop an

effective patient/GP relationship, which can develop to agree those joint decisions for your treatment.

Admission to a Mental Health Unit

At some point in the course of your care or treatment you may be admitted to a mental health unit. Usually this has been agreed by you and your doctors and you are regarded as a 'voluntary' patient. This means under the Mental Health Order (NI) 1986 you may leave at any time.

However some patients may need to be admitted into a mental health unit in order to keep themselves or others safe. They are regarded as 'detained' patients.



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A '**detained patient**' is someone who is not willing to go into hospital but who has been assessed by a doctor and an approved social worker (ASW) (or by a nearest relative) and that a request has been made for the person to be admitted to a mental health unit for assessment and/or

treatment under the Mental Health Order (NI) 1986.

There are policies and guidance governing the rights of patients who are detained. Patients have the right to receive information in writing about these rights and to have them explained to them. They should also be



Getting Help and Support

given information about access to the Mental Health Commission.

Let members of staff know if there is anything in particular worrying you, or if anything needs to be done, such as making sure your home is secure or that your pets will be looked after. Tell them if there are friends or relatives whom you want contacted.

All patients in a Mental Health Unit have the right to ask questions about their admission, care and treatment.

Remember to:

- **Ask for a copy of the hospital information leaflet if you did not already receive it.**
- **Tell the admitting nurse what medications you have been taking, bring your list of medications along with you.**
- **Ask who will be responsible for organising your care – the name of your consultant – the name of your nurse/keyworker if you don't already know.**
- **Ask how long you are likely to be in hospital.**
- **Ask when your visitors can or cannot visit.**

Assessments

While you are in the mental health unit you will have regular assessments. These assessments should cover your psychiatric, psychological, social and physical needs.

Getting Help and Support

You can play a major role in your own care by being involved with your team. You can work collaboratively with your mental health care team in assessing and planning what best meets your needs.

You may be asked if you want a relative/ carer/ friend to be involved in the assessments and to know what your careplan contains.

While in the unit there may be a number of programmes that you will be encouraged to participate in.

Some examples of these are:

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- Physical Activity Programmes
- Group Work Programmes

Points to Remember:

- **If you have to consent to any treatments or therapy, ask if there are risks attached.**
- **To ask how often you will need these treatments.**



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- **To ask how should you expect to feel after the treatments.**
- **To ask how long will the treatments last.**
- **If you wish to involve your relative/carer/friend/ in your care plan.**
- **Ask what role your relative/carer/friend can play in your careplan and how they can be supported to do this.**
- **To ask for an independent advocate if you want access to that service.**
- Information about the therapies, treatments and /or medications that will be continued at home.
- Contact arrangements with your community mental health team.
- An assessment of any risk to yourself or others.
- Arrangements for meeting your physical health and social needs including housing and benefits.

It is important that you fully understand your careplan on your discharge including any follow-up care.

Discharge and Aftercare

Your assessment and careplan (which you should have received a copy of) will include arrangements for your discharge and aftercare and may include for example:

Remember to ask:

- To have your careplan explained to you. If you want you can also ask to have it explained to your relatives or carers – they may find it helpful.

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- How will you know when you are not feeling well again.....are there any signs that you should look out for?
- If you have medications to take, know what you should be taking and for how long.
- If you are taking a lot of medications, ask your doctor or nurse to write down at what times these should be taken and what to do if you miss a dose. Tell doctors if you usually take vitamins, herbal supplements and over the counter medicines when you are at home. Ask their advice about continuing with these.

You may have been allocated a **'Key worker'** or a **'Care Co-ordinator'** who will be responsible for continuing

support in the community setting. If so make sure you

- Know how to contact them.
- How often you will get a visit from them.

Remember to ask:

- **Will I be given a written summary of my hospital care and treatment to pass on to my GP or is it sent directly to my GP?**
- **What is the date of my first meeting with my Community Mental Health Care Team?**
- **How can I contact them – telephone numbers.**
- **If you need to be in contact with them after 5pm and at weekends, how do you do that?**
- **How do I gain access to a Social Worker, if I need**

Getting Help and Support

help and advice around benefits, housing etc.....?

You may be given follow-up appointments with your Psychiatrist –

If so - Remember to ask for the following information to be written down and given to you:

- The dates and times of your appointments
- Directions of where you have to go to

If you cannot attend these appointments for any reason – make sure you let the team know as soon as you know and before your appointment is due.

If you are feeling unwell you may wish to have someone visit you.

Make your request for a home visit as early as possible to give the staff time to arrange this.



Taking Medications

Treatment for many mental health problems may include taking medications. These will be prescribed by your GP or your Psychiatrist

Remember to Ask:

- What are these medications for?
- Why do I need to take them?
- Do you have any written information about these medications?
- How much should I take and when should I take them?
- How long before I will feel some benefit from taking these medications?
- How important is it to take the medications at the exact time prescribed?
- What happens if I accidentally miss a dose? What should I do?
- What are the common side effects and what should I look out for?
- What should I do if I do experience any of these side effects?
- Are there any foods or drinks I should avoid while I'm on these medications?
- Ask if you can drive whilst taking any of the prescribed medication?
- How long should I expect to be on this medication?
- Is it safe to take these medications with the other medications that I'm taking?
- It is a good idea to keep a list of all the medications you are taking including

Taking Medications

- any vitamins or complementary remedies.
- You may take this list with you when you see your GP or any member of your mental health care team.
- If I don't take these medications – what will happen?
- If you are thinking about or planning not to take your prescribed medication, you should consider discussing this with your doctor beforehand. You may also wish to discuss this with either your relative/carer or a member of your mental health team.



Taking Medications

Remember:
Don't be afraid to speak to a member of your mental health team about your worries or concerns.

You are entitled to a **medication review** – your doctor should follow up regularly on your medication. This should occur at least once every six months.



DON'T FORGET TO TELL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU HAVE ANY ALLERGIES

Medication Safety

Here are some suggestions for how you can help yourself when you are prescribed medication:

- Check that it is the right medication that was ordered for you – if it seems incorrect; tell your doctor, nurse, pharmacist or carer.
- When you get your medication read the label very carefully. Make sure it has your name on it and that the medication dose is correct as far as you know.
- Get to know your local pharmacist, they will be

Taking Medications

able to give you information about your medications –they can also help with questions you may have about side effects.

- Make sure that you store your medication in a safe place and out of the reach of children.
- Make sure that you dispose of medications carefully; returning them to your pharmacist for disposal is a good idea.
- Do not take medications that are not prescribed for you.
- Do not share your medication with anyone else.
- What do the instructions on the label mean?



Contacting Mental Health Services in times of Difficulties

Some people may experience a crisis which could be to do with their mental health problem or in coping with the demands of daily living.

There should be an opportunity for you to discuss and agree a plan with your mental health care team of how you might cope with a crisis. Your plan should include written details of who to contact and where to get help or advice, both between 9am-5pm and Out of Hours. Alternatively you may contact the GP Out of Hours Service.

GP Out of Hours

The GP Out of Hours Service is there for urgent concerns which cannot wait until your own doctor's surgery is open.

- Write down the telephone number of your local OOHs service and keep it close to your telephone.

Attendance At The Accident And Emergency Department

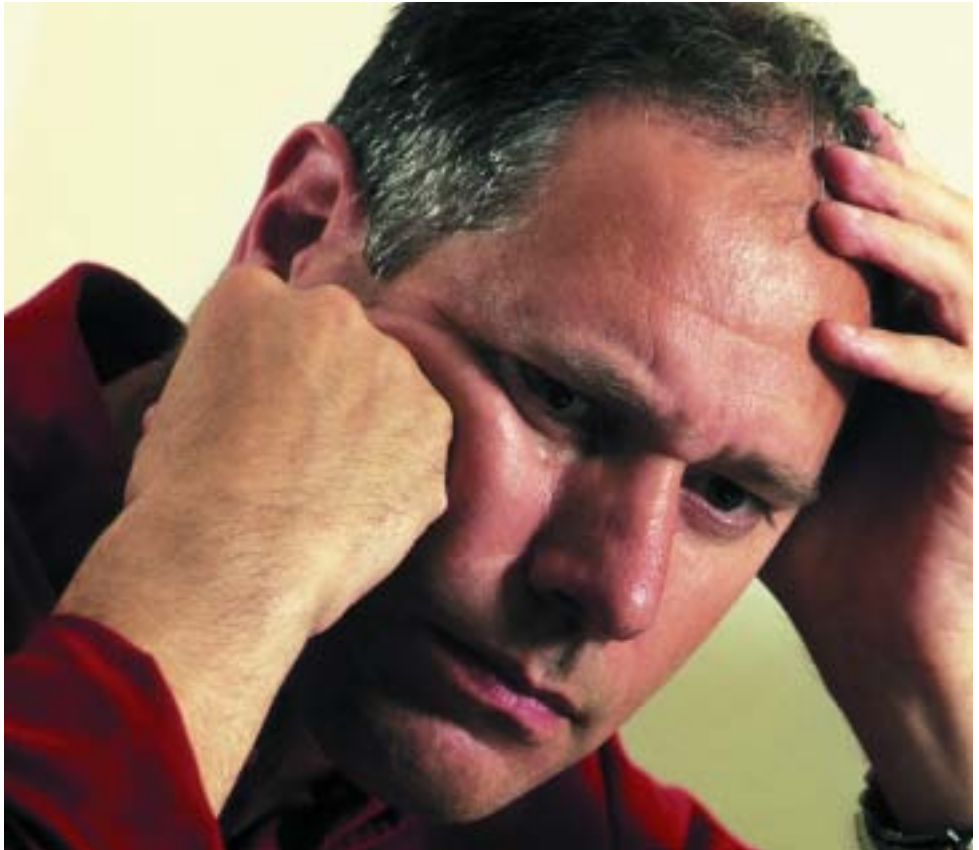
If you need to attend an Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department for help with your mental health problem you will be asked to give information to a nurse. The nurse will refer you to a doctor who will see you as soon as possible depending on the severity of your symptoms.

Contacting Mental Health Services in times of Difficulties

When you see the doctor you will be asked to repeat your symptoms and concerns.

A&E does not always have a psychiatric doctor available

in the department. A&E doctors have a lot of experience but not necessarily in the field of mental health care.



Some Terms used in Mental Health

Confidentiality

As a patient in the health service or user of social care services you will be asked by health or social care staff to supply information about yourself. This is so that you can receive appropriate treatment and care. The information you supply is stored very carefully because you have a legal right to have such personal details kept confidential.

All staff working in health and social care services in Northern Ireland are under both a legal and an ethical duty to protect the confidentiality of personal information relating to patients and other service users.

It also needs to help people who cannot make their own decisions.

If someone from your Mental Health Care team needs to make a decision for you they must be sure you are unable to make the decision yourself.

Capacity and Mental Capacity

This means being able to make your own decisions. The law should help people to make their own decisions.

If they have to make a decision for you they must decide what is in your best interest. They must listen to what you want and they must ask people who know you

Some Terms used in Mental Health

and make sure you are involved before making any decisions.

When you are well, you might wish to make people aware of your wishes and feelings on the relevant care and treatment issues. You can do this by writing it in a statement, or by telling someone you trust. (see sections on confidentiality and advance directives).

Advance Directives

This is a written agreement made between yourself and your care team when you are 'well' or have been deemed to have the 'capacity' to make decisions. It is a way that you can decide what, and at which time information is shared about

you with specified people, what your treatment and medication preferences are, and any other information that you want people to have in the event of you being too unwell to explain these yourself.

Independent Advocacy Services

You may wish to avail of an Independent Advocate who is not your relative/carer/friend to act with you or for you. They can ensure that you are listened to or they will speak on your behalf. They will help you when important decisions have to be made about your treatment, care plan or social care needs.

Remember to ask about how to access this service.

Mutual Respect

You have the right to be respected and you have the right to be listened to by members of your health care team or GP.

Your GP/Psychiatrist and other members of the mental health care team also have a right to be respected as people who are there to try to help and support you through your mental health problems.



Feedback/Suggestions/Complaints

Mental Health Services can be improved by listening to and learning from your experience.

It is important to say what has worked well for you and what has not worked so well.

If you are not happy with your care or treatment or if you feel there has been a breach of confidentiality tell the senior person involved in providing the service or you may prefer to speak with someone not directly involved in your care.

If you wish to make a complaint you can ask to speak to the Complaints Officer or to be given a copy of the Complaints leaflet. Some people require support in making a complaint. Help and advice can be provided by your local Health & Social Services Council. (see contact details at end of this booklet).

The Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland keeps under review the care and treatment of citizens who experience mental ill-health.

It visits citizens and/or their relatives in hospital and community environments, and people with a learning disability who live in hospital, nursing or residential homes, or with their families.

The Commission monitors the use of compulsion, and it will investigate complaints that powers have been misused. However, please note that it cannot release

Feedback/Suggestions/Complaints

people from compulsion under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. This function is performed by a different body: the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

The Commission has a legal duty to inquire into any person's situation if it appears to it that there may be:

- ill-treatment;
- deficiency in care or treatment;
- improper detention in hospital;
- improper reception into guardianship;
- exposure to loss or damage of a patient's property by reason of their mental disorder.

If you are concerned about the way in which you are being cared or treated for a mental health problem, or would like information about your legal rights, then the Mental Health Commission can be of help.

Mental Health Review Tribunal

The Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT) reviews the circumstances of people subject to compulsory detention, guardianship or supervision under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The tribunal has power to end the use of compulsion.

Feedback/Suggestions/Complaints

Each tribunal has three members: a legal member, a medical member and a lay member.

fee attached to this, also there may be limits attached as to what information is provided.

Freedom of Information 2000

The Freedom of Information Act gives anyone the right to ask public authorities for any information they hold. This includes Mental Health Services provided the information would not cause further mental health problems to the person. Any person who makes a request for information to a public authority must be informed whether the public authority holds that information. Subject to exemptions they should supply the information that has been requested. There may be a



Feedback/Suggestions/Complaints

Data Protection Act 1998

The Data Protection Act 1998 gives you the right to obtain information about yourself. This includes access to health records held by hospitals, GPs, dentists, social workers and other health care professionals. The records tell you about your health and any care or treatment you've received. First ask the person who holds the records if you can see them. If your request is refused you have a legal right to ask again. Health and Social Care Organisations have an obligation to protect an individual's personal information from inappropriate use.

If you have a query about Data Protection or access to records you can contact your local Health and Social Services Council (will be replaced by appropriate regional structure) for advice.



Some Useful Contacts

Advocacy Services

LAMP – (Life After Mental Health Problems – Peer Advocacy Service)

Alpha House, 3 Rosemary Street, Belfast BT1 1QA
Tel: 028 9024 2982

CAUSE – peer-led practical support for carers providing carer advocacy

Glendinning House, 6 Murray Street, Belfast BT1 6DN
Tel: 028 9023 8284
www.cause.org.uk

Rethink (Advocacy Services)

Knockbracken Health Care Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 8BH
Tel: 028 9040 2323
www.rethink.org

Irish Advocacy Network – service user led, peer advocacy network for people experiencing mental health difficulties

Head Office, Old Rooskey House, Rooskey, Monaghan

**Tel: 00353 473 8918/
00353 477 2863 or Omagh
Office 028 8225 8374**
**E-mail: admin@irish
advocacynetwork.com**

Mind yourself – provides peer support to people who experience mental health problems

15, Magazine Street, Derry BT48 6XL

Tel: 028 7128 0633

Some Useful Contacts

Support Groups

Aware Defeat Depression – for those people whose lives are affected by depression

Head Office, 10 Clarendon Street, Derry, BT48 7ET
Tel: 028 7126 0602

Belfast – 66 Donegal Street, Belfast BT1 2GT
Tel: 028 9032 1734

Care in Crisis – free counselling service to people experiencing major mental health difficulties

39 Union Street Lurgan Co Armagh BT66 8DY
Tel: 028 3832 9900

Mental Health & the Law

Mental Health Commission

10-20 Lombard Street, Belfast. BT1 1RD

Tel: 028 9043 6760
www.mhcni.org

Human Rights Commission

Temple Court, 39 North Street, Belfast BT1 1NA

Tel: 028 9024 3987
www.nihrc.org

Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (NIAMH)

Central Office, 80 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HE

Tel 028 9032 8474
www.niamh.co.uk

Some Useful Contacts

Mental Health Review Tribunal

Room 11, Annexe 6, Castle Buildings, Stormont, BELFAST, BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 9052 3388

The tribunal does not have a website

Health & Social Services Councils – can give assistance when making a complaint

- **Northern Health & Social Services Council**

Houston's Mill Site 10a Buchna Road, Broughshane, Ballymena, BT42 4NJ

Tel 028 2586 3950

www.nhssc.org

- **Southern Health & Social Services Council**

Quaker Buildings, High Street, Lurgan BT66 8BB

Tel: 028 3834 9858

www.shsscouncil.net

- **Eastern Health & Social Services Council**

1st Floor McKelvey House, 25-27 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 6GQ

Tel: 028 9032 1230

www.ehssc.org

- **Western Health & Social Services Council**

Hilltop, Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital, Omagh, BT79 0NS

Tel 028 8225 2555

www.whssc.org

Your Own Contacts

General Practitioner (GP):

Telephone No:

Psychiatrist:

Telephone No:

Psychiatric Nurse:

Telephone No:

Mental Health Unit:

Telephone No:

Pharmacist:

Telephone No:

Your Own Contacts

Name:

Telephone No:

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