



Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation
Cumann Altraí agus Ban Cabhrach na hÉireann
Working Together

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General Secretary
Phil NiSheaghdha

PNiS/CC

21st August 2020

Mr Stephen Donnelly TD
Minister for Health
Miesian Plaza
50-58 Lower Baggot St
Dublin 2
D02 XW14

Via email: minister@health.gov.ie ; stephen.donnelly@oireachtas.ie

Re: COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel Final Report

Dear Minister,

I refer to the report of the COVID-19 nursing home expert Panel and its recommendations which issued to you yesterday.

As you are aware, the INMO represents nursing grades in both public and private settings, inclusive of those working via an employment agency across older person services.

The recommendations of the Expert Panel has a direct impact on all our members working in these services.

There are many pressing issues associated with this report that we need to address with you.

Additionally, the protections afforded staff who are acquiring the virus at work remains a pressing and serious issue which requires Government action, including urgently amending the Health and Safety at Work regulations to provide statutory authority to the Health and Safety Authority in these workplaces.

Specific to the Expert panel's report the following are immediate areas we seek engagement on:

- 5.4 and 5.5 and the prioritisation of the framework for nurse staffing and the requirement to urgently apply it in both public and private nursing homes;
- 3.6 and 5.2 back up plans re: staffing;

- Implications for agency staff of recommendation 2.7(c) and the requirement to ensure that associated costs are borne by the employer/hirer and not the agency staff member;
- 2.4 testing: we have requested this facility across all health care services, not merely confined to care of older persons services. In the past two weeks three work locations in the acute setting have refused to test close contacts and instructed confirmed contacts to attend work;
- 3.6 safe staffing, this is obviously dependant on the immediate implementation of recommendations 5.4 and 5.5;
- 3.2 Practical application of this recommendation and the capacity of HIQA to inspect in real time the 576 registered premises;
- 5.6 Dialogue must take place regarding the practical implications of this recommendation and the consequences for sessional multi-site attendees such as GP's and other clinical grades, required to provide services on a multi-site basis;
- 5.7 Engagement with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment must include representation from this Organisation on behalf of our members working in this sector;
- Funding for recommendation 10 and staffing implications;
- Staffing implications of recommendation 11;
- 15 all-important person-centred recommendations that require further discussion, inclusive of expansion proposal for Community Intervention teams and role of expert nursing personnel in the community setting;

Obviously, these are but some of the issues arising for our members, but they are of an urgent nature, therefore we request that a meeting is arranged with the INMO as a matter of urgency.

I will contact your office directly in respect of same.

Thank you for your attention to this note,

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PHIL NÍ SHEAGHDHA
General Secretary

cc:
Rachel Kenna, Chief Nurse of Ireland