



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

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PNIS/MR

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Mr Robert Watt
Secretary General
Department of Public Expenditure & Reform
Government Buildings
Upper Merrion Street
Dublin 2

Dear Mr Watt

I refer to your letter, dated 7th August 2018, in response to INMO correspondence, dated 31st July 2018.

Notwithstanding your non-acceptance of what you describe as criticisms, set out in our letter of 31st July 2018, I think it is important to reiterate that we reaffirm the contents of that letter. Furthermore, we remind the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform that both the Department of Health, and the HSE, have acknowledged the crisis that exists in nursing and midwifery. These are borderless, global, professions, with an acknowledged growing worldwide shortage and Ireland is simply unable to offer competitive packages of employment.

The Department of Health, and the HSE have acknowledged, in writing, to this Organisation, and made public their acknowledgement, that this competitive labour market is problematic. This was the subject of independent verification and a report issued to government in December 2017, setting out the inability to reach Department of Health set targets for recruitment and retention of nurses and midwives, during the calendar year 2017, early indication is that 2018 will not see any improvement.

In addition, it is without question that our hospitals and community care services, have increased activity, and retention is directly affected by the inability of staff, who work short on a continuous basis to provide the care that is required. This is the real situation currently, before the necessary, additional, capacity is introduced.

In respect of the figures, in 2007, as you may, or may not, be aware, the count for student nurses/midwives was agreed and applied from 2008. As previously

mentioned, independently verified reports, on recruitment and retention, issued to the Minister for Health, excluding student nurses as they are not recruited under the funded workforce plan, they are assigned placement as part of a training scheme.

In the Quarterly Report, for December 2017, it was verified, and accepted, by the Department of Health and the HSE, that the census change for the entire year, of 2017, was 847, whereas the target whole-time equivalent number for nurses and midwives was 1,224, which had not been reached due to difficulties in recruitment and retention.

There remains a very real problem in recruitment and retention and this is accepted by the Department of Health. It is accepted by the HSE. It has been verified independently and it is disappointing that the only Department that continues to argue against this point, is the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Pay

The INMO does not believe the statement in your letter which is that the entry grade salary is competitive. In fact, we believe the entry grade salary, and the salary for nursing, along the career path, is not reflective of the responsibilities they bear or, indeed, competitive in the current climate where competing markets are able to offer greater remuneration.

It is simply a fact that having sought to address the recruitment difficulties, within the professions of nursing and midwifery, by all means possible, except addressing the salary and remuneration difficulties they face, has resulted in a failure to reach targets set by the Department of Health in the area of recruitment and retention.

In the recently published Public Health England draft report on Workforce Strategy, it is noted that pay is a significant factor in recruitment and retention staff in the NHS and with a more flexible approach to pay to address serious skill shortages being required. The HSE acknowledge, and have advised the Department of Health, that it is reasonable to note that Ireland is no different in this regard in the areas of nursing and midwifery and, indeed, Ireland is likely to come under increasing pressure as a result of Brexit and the impact of same when the UK refocuses their efforts on recruitment and retention. The opinion of the HSE - the employer - is that our competitiveness in the area of remuneration will need to be strengthened when offering packages of employment for nursing and midwifery grades.

Specialist Grades

In respect of the Advanced Specialist grades within nursing, the point we make is the growth has not reached the target set by the Department of Health. The target has not been set by the INMO. Any, albeit inadequate, achievement to date merely reflects, in many instances, specialist posts that were in the system and retitled in 1999 with a very stagnant number within the system since that time. In fact, this year's predictions reflect a drop in Advanced Nurse Practitioner and Clinical Nurse Specialist grades.

Turnover

A July 2018 international study titled 'Nurse Retention', undertaken by the International Centre on Nurse Migration, the international CGFNS and International Council of Nurses report that in a survey of nurses working in 10 countries including Ireland, they found that 33% intended changing jobs in the next year, and 9% intended leaving the profession.

The cost of dealing with the skill gap in health care organisations is significant, this study demonstrated that the time delay in replacing nurses who leave, the additional costs associated with agency and the negative effects on continuity of care and the disruption to service delivery, lead to negative impacts which are damaging to patient care and organisational costs. Turnover costs are significant and without workforce planning, will continue. The focus, as recommended by this study, must be on policy planning. Unfortunately, as we advised in our letter to the Minister, currently we have a dispute with the HSE, which is the subject of WRC intervention, as they have not, as yet, produced a final 2018 Funded Workforce Plan for Nursing and Midwifery.

There is no doubt that the HSE, the Department of Health and government parties across the Houses of the Oireachtas, understand that there is now a crisis in the recruitment and retention of nursing and midwifery grades, and that the collective, desired, expansion of the health service, through the Capacity Report, will be severely compromised if this issue is not addressed proactively and immediately.

It is incumbent on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to assist in resolving this crisis, considering the effects of this shortage, and to join in the public acknowledgement of this crisis by the Minister of Health

Thanking you

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PHIL NI SHEAGHDHA
General Secretary