Dear Deputy Bannon,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The priority of the Senior Management Team at the Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar is to maintain safe standards of care for patients at the Hospital. Nurses and Midwives carry a heavy burden of responsibility with regard to the quality of care they provide and the overall safety of their patients. During the intercensal period 2002-2011 the combined population of counties Longford & Westmeath increased from 102,926 to 125,164 persons an increase of almost 22%, which is significantly higher than the national growth rate of 17%. This increase coupled with demographic pressure and the reduction in private health insurance coverage has placed significant additional demands on the Hospital particularly in relation to bed capacity and turnover. Bed numbers have reduced from 220 to 204 service levels and Hospital activity has increased. This has been achieved through the development of rapid access and ambulatory assessments units supported by senior clinical decision makers, improved admission and discharge planning and improved access to diagnostics achieved by better management of available slots. However with the ongoing impact of the moratorium on the service it has been necessary to review staffing levels and the Hospital has sought additional staff to support the Emergency Department and the Obstetric & Gynaecology Service. Indeed an overall Work Force Plan has been submitted by the Hospital Management Team to Senior Management for further consideration. The initial priority will be to look at the Emergency Department and Obstetric and Gynaecology staff, however further reviews of staffing will be required in other areas in the Hospital.
I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

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Mr. James Conway
Assistant National Director
Acute Hospital Services