



Oifig an Leas-Stiúrthóir Ginearálta-Oibríochtaí
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí Sláinte
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30th May 2019

Deputy Bernard Durkan
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ Ref: 21149/19

To ask the Minister for Health the extent to which staff shortages have shown up in the past six months which may have impeded the delivery and quality of the health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy Durkan

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

The Health Service is Ireland's largest employer and our service operates under constant financial and staffing pressures. The National Service Plan 2019 makes clear the challenges faced by the HSE, including; the scale of increasing demand for our services, including high hospital occupancy levels; waiting times for access to many services; the increasing demands on community services and the demand-led schemes. These challenges remain, notwithstanding the increase in funding received for 2019 budget. However, we are required to expend resources and provide services within the financial and WTE parameters as set out in the National Service Plan 2019.

We also have specific areas where we have problems recruiting staff. The HSE continues to recruit into funded service development posts including in Disability and Mental Health Services and to replace critical clinical vacancies across all services. In addition, conversion of agency is on-going to reduce costs and increase quality. However, agency and overtime continues to be used to staff critical front line patient services.

There has been an overall increase in WTEs across the system compared to the same period last year and since December 2018. This information can be sourced via the link below.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/our-workforce/workforce-reporting/workforce-intelligence-by-care-group-division.html>

Recruitment initiatives are on-going across Hospital Groups and CHOs, particularly for nurses. At local service level, rosters are flexed, resources are reassigned and cross cover arrangements are in place in order to respond to periods of expected increasing demand. This has proved very successful during the Winter Period through the delivery of Winter Plans and through Preparedness Plans for leave periods, thus ensuring service responsiveness and continuity.

As established in the HSE National Service Plan 2019, a key priority for all services is to ensure that the resources which have been made available to health and social care are targeted towards providing care and support for those patients and clients most in need, and ensuring that these services are delivered efficiently and effectively, consistent with best available evidence, to an

affordable funding level that is sustainable in 2019 and 2020, while also prioritising the delivery of safe services.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Anne O'Connor
Deputy Director General
Chief Operations Officer