



National Doctors Training and Planning
Health Service Executive
Sancton Wood Building, Heuston South Quarter
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Oiliúint agus Pleanáil Náisiúnta na nDochtúirí
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4th January 2021

Deputy Colm Burke
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Ref: PQ 44310/20

To ask the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to the modernisation of postgraduate specialist training reflecting changes in the practice of medicine and the changing demographics of doctors in training by establishing a differentiated model which provides clearer career paths with greater predictability of training arrangements, greater predictability at the outset of training schemes regarding locations of rotations over the course of a scheme and the improvement of working conditions as set out in the recommendations made in the report of the Strategic Review of Medical Training and Career Structures; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Burke

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.

National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) Response

Training continues to evolve and change. Some examples of how training has changed in recent years are highlighted below. Indeed the onset of the Covid-19 has resulted in changes to how training is delivered now and into the future and the HSE is investing significantly in areas such as simulation training. Following the publication of the Strategic review of Medical Training and Career Structures there have been a number of changes to postgraduate specialist training including:

- Clearer career paths and greater predictability of training arrangements:
 - All newly appointed trainees receive a minimum of 2 years pre-defined rotations, a minimum of 13 weeks prior to commencing training/entry to the scheme;
 - All trainees entering year 3 of a training scheme receive a minimum of 2 years pre-defined rotations a minimum of 13 weeks prior to commencing year 3 of the scheme;
 - Selection criteria for postgraduate training programmes, including eligibility and shortlisting criteria, are published on the relevant training body website in advance of the opening of schemes applications (including weighting for various elements of the selection process and marking system for the various elements of the selection process described);



- Interview feedback is available to all applicants interviewed for national training programmes;
- A medical careers and training website (<http://www.medicalcareers.ie/>) has been developed through the Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies which provides information on all specialist training programmes making it easier for medical students and trainee doctors to navigate the different training options available in Ireland;
- An Annual Medical Careers Day has been established to provide career advice for medical graduates. Attendees are given the opportunity to speak with senior trainees and consultants and learn about the broad spectrum of career opportunities open to them through career planning seminars, presentations, workshops, career clinics and information stands for each postgraduate training body;
- Growth of Post CSCST Fellowships: Post-CSCST Fellowships were introduced in 2014, along with a new pay rate for these Fellows at the highest point of the Specialist Registrar (SpR) scale. A register of approved post-CSCST Fellowships for the Irish health service was established in 2014, with 56 Fellowships approved to date¹.

In 2018 the HSE launched the Aspire Post CSCST Fellowship awards which saw the introduction of 6 fully funded post CSCST fellowships. The initiative expanded in 2019 to include 2 additional fellowships for Mental Health and has grown further for 2021 with 2 additional fellowships for Primary Care. The initiative has funded 22 Post CSCST fellowships to date.

Covid Era Post CSCST Fellowships: In recognition the unprecedented challenges faced by the Irish health service due to COVID the HSE are establishing up to 40 fully funded high quality Post CSCST Fellowships to commence in July 2021 in key areas of need within the Health Service. The process of identification and recruitment of the Fellowships is being managed through the Postgraduate Training Bodies with input from the HSE.

- Changes in the practice of medicine and the changing demographics of doctors in training
 - Expansion of the National Supernumerary Flexible Training scheme posts: Since July 2016 the scheme has expanded from 24 to 32 annual places. The scheme has also been extended to junior trainees from year 2 BST onwards.
Job sharing/less than full time arrangements: In order to expand the opportunities for flexible and less than fulltime training (LTFT) to more doctors' the HSE have recently piloted a scheme whereby job-sharing posts were topped-up from the

¹ Not all are filled annually as these posts are generally created by the conversion of existing Specialist Registrar or non-training posts. Applications for renewal or re-approval of Post-CSCST Fellowships are submitted to NDTP annually

supernumerary flexible training scheme. The HSE are working closely with training bodies to expand this scheme and facilitate interested trainees in more job-sharing posts for 2021;

- Introduction of Spark programme: The Spark Innovation Programme is an NCHD-led national initiative that seeks to support, promote and recognise innovation amongst healthcare staff. The Programme offerings are multiple including seed funding, innovation competitions, dedicated support for early career staff, but also education and mentorship to empower healthcare staff and enable projects that improve the health service to come to fruition;
- Introduction of online National Employment Record (NER) which has streamlined HR and Occupational Health processes and eliminated the paperwork burden associated with rotations. It is now used by circa 7500 NCHDs nationally. It also provides a fully transparent and on-line 24/7 system for NCHDs to claim expenses through the Training Supports Scheme and Clinical Course and Exam Refund Scheme;
- Enhanced Financial Supports: The Training Support Scheme (TSS), introduced in July 2019, provides reimbursement for approved exams, courses or conferences and is open to all NCHDs. Since July 2019 the full costs of approved examination/courses are eligible for refund to NCHDs under the Clinical Course Exam Refund Scheme (CCERS), this was previously capped at €450. Claims under both the CCERS and TSS can now be made easily via NCHDs NER which provides complete transparency in terms of claims they may have made and balance of funds remaining;
- Introduction of the Lead NCHD programme: The programme was introduced to provide a formal link at hospital management level between NCHDs and management, and to develop leadership capacity within NCHDs. The programme now runs across 32 acute hospitals, Community Health Organisations (CHOs), Public Health and Primary Care settings. Approximately 70 NCHD leads are appointed annually and over 400 NCHDs have held the position to date;
- Introduction of the Management and Leadership Scholarship: Since 2017 part funding is available annually for 24 NCHDs pursuing a Master's Degree in Management and Leadership Skills to further promote and support clinician leadership amongst NCHDs and prepare doctors for future management and leadership roles;
- Establishment of Training Leads: After the successful pilot in the UL and Saolta Hospital Groups, Training Leads are now established in five hospital groups. The Training Leads are consultants who have overall responsibility for all hospitals within their particular group, and are responsible for ensuring that each clinical site adhere to the Medical Council criteria for training. Training Leads have a key role in co-ordinating generic training issues at clinical site level. Training Leads support the needs of both trainees and non-training scheme doctors.
- Investment in Simulation Training: This year the HSE has made significant investment in the infrastructure required for the development of simulation training capabilities within the 7 Hospital groups. Simulation training is an established and reliable tool used to support the delivery of postgraduate training through advanced educational technology. Investment in simulation facilities, audio visual (AV) systems and virtual reality (VR) platforms can accurately recreate real time events allowing for training to be delivered to a wider number of NCHDs



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in virtually any setting or environment, which is particularly important now as a result of COVID-19.

Yours sincerely

Eddie Staddon
General Manager
National Doctors Training and Planning