



Deputy David Cullinane
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

5th November, 2021

PQ Ref: 47869/21 - To ask the Minister for Health if he will address a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) in relation to the health and social care career pathway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - David Cullinane

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

I am writing with regard to the above parliamentary question in relation to Health & Social Care Professionals' Career Pathway, and in particular, the arrangements recently agreed between the HSE and FORSA trade union, in the context of the employment of an additional 1,200 HSCPs across our Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) in Primary Care.

In the first instance, I should advise that as part of a WRC national agreement between the HSE and FORSA, it was agreed that a process would be established to "review the criteria set down in the Expert Review Group on AHPs 2000, supplemented by the McHugh/Doran report of 2004 to take account of the changes to working practices within the professions since the production of the reports".

This review process is underway, chaired by an independent facilitator, Mr. Robbie Ryan. The review will encompass the span of professions originally addressed in the report and covers all areas of the HSE.

While recognising that the review referenced above will take some time to complete, and the full scope of its terms in line with the WRC agreement, there was however an immediate priority to address a positive range of developments currently being implemented in Primary Care in the community. You will be aware that in 2020, the Department of Health and Sláintecare approved the HSE Business Case for the full rollout of the Enhanced Community Care Programme (ECC). The transformation programme aims to deliver increased levels of healthcare to our citizens with service delivery reoriented toward General Practice, Primary Care and community based service delivery.

The ECC Programme is a significant programme of investment in Primary Care, with funding in the order of €200m committed and 3,500 new additional staff being recruited across CHNs, Community Specialist Teams for Older People and for those with Chronic Disease, as well as initiatives in Health and Well-being, along with the coordination of volunteer and community supports across networks linked to the community call model, together with additional posts, front of house in acute settings, to support an end-to-end integrated implementation of the model.



With the implementation of this new model, there is a requirement for over 1,200 new additional HSCPs to be recruited across a range of professions at basic and senior level, which can be summarised as follows:

- 400 additional basic posts will be appointed through open competition;
- 800 additional senior posts will be filled on the following basis:
 - Approx. 500 of these senior posts will be filled through the competency process now agreed from the existing basic staff;
 - The remaining approx. 300 senior posts will be filled through existing panels & open competition – all of the 800 senior posts will require backfill at basic level.

Striking this balance between 500 existing primary care staff being promoted through the competency framework with 300 being addressed through existing panels and open competition is necessary to:

- Ensure sustainability of service and stability of the workforce during this phase of the pandemic / vaccination programme and winter challenges;
- Minimising unnecessary movement of staff and loss of expertise within and between CHOs – this is particularly relevant in the CHOs in the greater Dublin area with long term challenges in sustaining core HSCP staff;
- Ensure the maintenance of local knowledge and expertise in Primary Care at a senior level to support and supervise the significant number of basic grade staff now being appointed.

Notwithstanding, the use of a competency approach to the filling of senior posts, there will also be a requirement to fill a significant number of the posts in Primary Care through open competition. These along with existing senior vacancies and development posts in other divisions, will also continue to be filled through open competition. I am also attaching for your information, a copy of the FAQ on the HSCP.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pat Healy'.

Pat Healy
National Director
Clinical Programme Implementation & Professional Development