



Géaroibríochtaí
Aonad 4A, Áras Dargan, An Ceantar Theas, An Bóthar
Míleata Cill Mhaighneann, Baile Átha Cliath 8

Acute Operations
Unit 4A, The Dargan Building, Heuston South Quarter,
Military Road, Kilmainham, Dublin 8

☎: 0179 59971 📧: acute.operations@hse.ie

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Deputy Marian Harkin TD

Dáil Éireann

Leinster House

Dublin 2

PQ 34078/22

To ask the Minister for Health his plans to address the current shortfall of over 100 nurse specialists in neurology in the Irish healthcare system; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear DeputyHarkin,

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.

Response:

The National Clinical Programme for Neurology (NCP Neurology) recognises the significant role that nurse specialists play in the triaging, assessment, treatment and ongoing care of the neurological patient and we endorse the continued expansion of the nursing workforce in the field of Neurological care. NCP Neurology's workstreams in recent years have focused on building capacity in Neurological services, by increasing the Whole Time Equivalent nurses dedicated to nursing.

In May 2022, confirmation was received from the National Director, Change and Innovation, Healthcare Strategy that the Sláintecare Integration Fund – SIF 61, which relates to Headache clinics in Neurology services would be mainstreamed on a recurrent basis from. This pilot project, initially funded through the Sláintecare Integration Fund includes the provision of 3 newly appointed Clinical Nurse Specialists in Galway University Hospital, St James University Hospital and Tallaght University Hospital. These posts were advertised and filled in 2020/2021 and now have ongoing recurrent funding, so that these posts and services can be maintained.

NCPN plans to re-submit via the 2022 estimates process for additional clinical nurse specialists and advanced nurse practitioners across different specialities and hospital groups and to scale up the Headache project to include 7 additional hospital sites.

In addition to this, NCP Neurology are working alongside the Scheduled Care Transformation Programme (SCTP) on the development of a number of clinical pathways on a range of Neurological conditions including; Huntington Disease, Epilepsy, Motor Neuron Disease. NCP Neurology plans to make a series of submissions with SCTP, to the new service development estimates in 2023 to incrementally increase the overall number of nurse specialists to correspond with the pathways under development. The plan is to year by year bridge the gap currently experienced in the nursing workforce, which was highlighted in the NCP Neurology and the Neurological Alliance of Ireland's survey of Neurological services in 2020.

I trust this answers your question to your satisfaction.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Benton

General Manager

Acute Operations