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BY EMAIL ONLY

Deputy Peadar Tóibín
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

2nd July 2025

PQ35042/25 - To ask the Minister for Health the nurse to patient ratio in Ireland, broken down by hospital.

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

Thank you for your representation.

The Framework for Safe Nurse Staffing and Skill Mix employs an evidence-based approach that determines staffing levels and skill mix (including both registered nurses and healthcare assistants) based on various crucial factors. This ensures that staffing aligns with the care requirements of patients, rather than nurse to patient ratio.

The Framework, developed by the Taskforce on Staffing and Skill Mix for Nursing, considers the following key elements to determine optimal staffing at a ward or department level:

- **Patient Elements:** Recognising that all patients have differing and fluctuating care needs. It incorporates acuity and dependency measurements, the requirement for enhanced care (e.g., 1:1 supervision), and professional nursing judgement.
- **Nurse Staffing Elements:** This accounts for the size, educational levels, and skill mix of the nursing team. Factors such as staffing profiles, the ratio of registered nurses to healthcare assistants, staff education, recruitment, and planned and unplanned absences are all taken into account.
- **Organisational Factors:** The broader environment impact on nursing numbers and skill mix. This includes the culture and climate of the care setting, organisational care processes, nurse leadership, physical capacity, and geographical layout of the ward/department.
- **Outcomes:** The Framework links staffing decisions to patient and staff outcomes. Monitoring nurse-sensitive patient outcomes (such as reduced length of stay, reduced adverse events, and decreased missed care) and staff experiences (including job satisfaction and retention) is essential to validate that staffing levels are safe and effectively meeting patient needs.

Implementation and Progress:

The Framework for Safe Nurse Staffing and Skill Mix has been implemented in a phased approach across various care settings:

- **Phase 1:** Focused on general and specialist medical and surgical care settings in adult hospitals.
- **Phase 2:** Concentrated on adult emergency care settings, including Emergency Departments and Injury Units.
- **Phase 3:** Is currently underway, extending the Framework to general non-acute care settings, including long-term residential care for older persons, general community care settings, and step-down and rehabilitation facilities.

Due to the dynamic nature of patient acuity and dependency, the focus is on ensuring that each ward and department has the appropriate staffing and skill mix to safely meet the evolving needs of its patient population at any given time, as determined by the Framework's methodology.

I hope this provides you with some assistance.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Hayden
General Manager
Office of the Chief Clinical Officer