

28<sup>th</sup> June 2000

Chief Executive Officer  
Each Health Board + ERHA

Personnel Officer  
Each Health Board


**Re: Location Allowance – Secure Units, Mental Health Services**

I wish to refer to the introduction of a location allowance payable to nurses working in Secure Units in Mental Health Services.

Following negotiations, agreement has recently been reached with the nursing unions in relation to the basis upon which this allowance will be paid. The agreed criteria for payment is attached.

Arrangements should be made to facilitate payment and appropriate arrears to 31 March 1999 in respect of nurses working in such Units. The new arrangements for payment of allowances to nurses were sanctioned in Department of Health and Children Circular 112/09, (issued on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1999), which set out the overall conditions attached to such allowances and sought details of the financial adjustments required. Such details should be forwarded to the Department.

Yours sincerely,



**Martin McDonald**  
**PROJECT MANAGER**

cc. Ms Teresa Cody, Nursing Policy Division, Department of Health and Children

## Secure Units in Mental Health Services – Criteria for payment of Location Allowance

Secure Units, also known as Intensive Care or Special Care Units, provide observation and assessment of patients whose management requires close observation, frequent nursing interventions in a structured low stimulus and intense therapeutic environment. Such Units would generally have the following admission criteria / patient profile ;

1. People with acute exacerbation of psychosis who present with threatening behaviour or have a propensity for violent/aggressive behaviour and who may require higher than normal staffing ratios on a medium term basis.
2. Patient's exhibiting aggressive and/or with severe behavioural problems including those who may have repeatedly tried to get out of hospital.
3. People with an acute exacerbation of chronic illness for which low dependency, rehabilitation wards or high support hostels are unable to provide adequate care because of the manifestation of threatening behaviour.

Wards which are locked intermittently or otherwise are not, because of this practice alone, Secure Units for the purposes of payment of the Secure Unit Location allowance.

Similarly, where alternative models of service provision are being operated, in respect of patients meeting the criteria set out above, then payment of the allowance would not be precluded.

In the light of on-going developments in Mental Health services, it is a matter for the service management to determine whether or not a particular Unit fulfils the criteria outlined above into the future.