

Ref: 50/2003

15 December, 2003

Regional Chief Executive
Eastern Regional Health Authority

Chief Executive Officer
Each Health Board

Secretary/Manager
Each Public Voluntary
and Joint Hospital Board
outside the ERHA region

Chief Officer
Each Mental Handicap Agency
outside the ERHA region

DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH AND
CHILDREN
AN ROINN
SLÁINTE AGUS LEANAÍ

Quality and Fairness
A Health System for You

Payment of the Second (50%) Phase of Benchmarking Increases and 3% General Round Increase under Sustaining Progress

A Chara,

I am directed by the Minister for Health and Children to refer to the Social Partnership Agreement *Sustaining Progress* and in particular the provisions of the Agreement relating to the second (50%) phase of the pay recommendations of the Public Service Benchmarking Body (PSBB) and the general round increase of 3%, both of which are payable from 1 January 2004 next. As you are aware, payment of these increases are strictly conditional on the successful completion of the performance verification process detailed in *Sustaining Progress*.

The assessment of verified progress in achieving the modernisation and change objectives set out in *Sustaining Progress* has now been completed. This assessment has been carried out by the Health Service Performance Verification Group (HSPVG) in accordance with the procedures set out in section 26.5 of the Agreement.

Having regard to the payment decisions of the HSPVG and the overall assessment of progress achieved since 1 July 2003, the final decision of the Secretary General is that payment of the second phase of the benchmarking increases and the 3% general round increase to all staff in the health service covered by the PSBB's pay recommendations, with effect from 1 January 2004, is warranted.

In this context, please find enclosed a copy of the revised consolidated pay scales incorporating these increases for all relevant grades in the health service.

The sanction of the Minister is now conveyed for the application of these new pay scales with effect from 1 January 2004 to all eligible grades. Funding for payment of the approved increases has been allocated in the Letter of Determination for 2004 dated 4 December 2003 (section 14 refers).

Detailed feedback on the results of the performance verification process based on the report received from the HSPVG will be communicated to you shortly.

The Department is concerned to ensure that the many positive results now being achieved at pilot stage in addressing the specific modernisation objectives set for the health services under *Sustaining Progress* will be translated into a more positive general impact on the health system overall. At a recent meeting of the Health Service National Joint Council, the trade union side gave a commitment to maintaining the momentum for change and modernisation and to moving the changes being piloted towards more widespread adoption. Both sides accepted the need for a more readily transparent assessment and verification process.

In this regard, the HSPVG have identified the following five priority areas where health agencies are required to achieve real and verifiable progress between now and 1 June 2005:

- Customer Service;
- Industrial Relations Stability;
- Performance Management;
- Reform; and
- Value for Money.

It is essential that clearly defined targets, against which further progress can be incrementally measured in relation to these priorities, be set over the remaining phases of the Agreement. Accordingly, the Letter of Determination for 2004 requested that specific targets under Sustaining Progress in relation to the above objectives should be included in Service Plans for 2004.

You should note that this sanction does not extend to grades included in the Parallel Benchmarking exercise (i.e. craftworkers and non-nursing personnel) who are to be subject to a separate assessment process nor does it cover staff in specialists agencies in the health sector (i.e. non-commercial state bodies) in respect of which the performance verification process is currently being finalised.

Any queries in relation to implementation arrangements for the above circular should be communicated, in the first instance, to Ms Nuala Coleman, Personnel Management and Development Division, Department of Health and Children (*tel. 6354058, email nuala_coleman@health.irlgov.ie*).

Finally, it would be appreciated if you could circulate this letter to relevant agencies or bodies under your aegis, as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,


William Beausang

Principal
Personnel Management and Development