Implementation of Recommendations of the Commission on Nursing

Second Annual Progress Report of Monitoring Committee

2001
Introduction

1.1 This is the second annual report of the Monitoring Committee established by the Minister for Health and Children to oversee progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Commission on Nursing *A Blueprint for the Future*. It outlines the further progress made during 2001 in achieving targets set out in the Priority Action Plan for 2000 and 2001 agreed between the Department of Health and Children and the Nursing Alliance.

1.2 The Monitoring Committee is pleased to note that the Government provided a further £12 million (€15.24 million) in 2001 for initiatives under the Priority Action Plan. This brings to £22 million (€27.9 million) in total the amount made available since 2000 for the implementation of the Commission on Nursing’s recommendations set out in the Plan.

1.3 The Monitoring Committee particularly welcomes the announcement by the Minister for Health and Children on 1 November 2001 of Government approval for his proposals for the implementation of degree level education for nursing students in 2002, and for the substantial additional capital and revenue funding required to underpin the development. This decision will implement a central recommendation of the Commission on Nursing, and will finally put the education of nurses on a par with that of other health care professionals.

1.4 The Monitoring Committee has agreed a new Action Plan for the implementation of further recommendations of the Commission on Nursing during 2002 and 2003.
Monitoring Committee

Membership

2.1 The membership of the Monitoring Committee is as follows:

Bernard Carey (Chairperson)  Department of Health and Children
Peta Taaffe*    Department of Health and Children
Mary McCarthy*    Department of Health and Children
Susan Reilly    Department of Health and Children
Teresa Cody    Department of Health and Children
Eugene Donoghue    An Bord Altranais
Gerard Barry    Health Service Employers Agency
James Doran**    Health Service Employers Agency
Brendan Mulligan**    Health Service Employers Agency
Maureen Windle    Northern Area Health Board
Tom Beegan***    South Eastern Health Board
John Cregan***    Midland Health Board
Michael Lenihan    National Maternity Hospital
Aidan Gleeson    Cappagh Orthopaedic Hospital
Jim Gilmartin    Cregg House
Maura Donovan    Stewarts Hospital (Alternate for Mr Gilmartin)
Lenore Mrkwicka    Irish Nurses Organisation
David Hughes    Irish Nurses Organisation
Eilish Hardiman    Irish Nurses Organisation
Gerry Coone    Psychiatric Nurses Association
Des Kavanagh    Psychiatric Nurses Association
Kay Collins    SIPTU
Padraig Heverin    SIPTU
Kevin Callinan    IMPACT
Yvonne O’Shea****    National Council for Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery
Joan Phelan****    Nursing and Midwifery Planning & Development Unit, South Eastern Health Board

*Ms. Mary McCarthy replaced Ms. Peta Taaffe in October 2001
**Mr. Brendan Mulligan replaced Mr. James Doran in January 2001
***Mr. John Cregan replaced Mr. Tom Beegan in October 2001
****Ms Yvonne O’Shea and Ms Joan Phelan were co-opted onto the Monitoring Committee in March 2001
Meetings
2.2 The Monitoring Committee met on four occasions during 2001.

Secretarial Support
2.3 The Monitoring Committee once again wishes to record its sincere appreciation of the staff of the Nursing Policy Division of the Department of Health and Children for their assistance in servicing its meetings.
Progress in Implementing Recommendations in 2001

3.1 National Council for Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery

The National Council has approved the following Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialist positions under the Immediate Pathway up to the 31st December 2001:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>In process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatry</td>
<td>374*</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwifery</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick Children</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Handicap</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,169</strong></td>
<td><strong>234</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes 198 Community Mental Nurses

The Framework for the establishment of Advanced Nurse Practitioner and Advanced Midwife Practitioner posts was published by the National Council in May 2001.

The Department of Health and Children has provided the National Council with an annual budget of £2 million (€2.54 million) for continuing education. In February 2001, the National Council published criteria and processes for the allocation of this funding.

Four editions of the National Council’s Newsletter were distributed to every registered nurse during 2001.

3.2 Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Units

By the end of 2001, the Eastern Regional Health Authority, Midland, North Eastern, North Western, Southern, South Eastern and Western Health Boards had each appointed a Director to its Regional Unit. Support staff have/are in the process of being appointed. The Mid-Western Health Board has offered an appointment to the successful applicant.

3.3 Revised National Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery in the Community

A nurse researcher has been appointed to the Department of Health and Children to work as project officer on the strategy. The Steering Group overseeing the development of the strategy held its first meeting on 28th November 2001, at which the terms of reference for the strategy were agreed.

The first stage in the consultative process in the development of the National Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery in the Community took place in December 2001. Over 90 representatives from a wide range of interested groups, including nursing, midwifery, medicine, voluntary sector, health and social care professional, education, statutory bodies and policy makers attended the
meeting to provide a focus and direction in the development of the strategy.

### 3.4 Review of Sick Children’s Nursing Course

The *Report of the Paediatric Nurse Education Review* Group was published in December 2000. Its recommendations have been accepted by the Department of Health and Children.

Recommendations implemented to date relate to a fees and salary initiative for student RSCNs, the establishment of specialist clinical courses at Higher Diploma level within paediatric nursing (ICU & A/E) and the funding of a feasibility study into the provision of paediatric nurse education in Cork.

Work on the outstanding recommendations is progressing well within the context of a Paediatric Nurse Teachers Working Group. This Group is preparing a strategy for the further integration of paediatric nurse education into third level sector. A vision is being developed that includes a new and innovative educational programme for the preparation of paediatric nurses at pre-registration level.

A National Paediatric Nursing Advisory Forum was established in 2001. It provides a mechanism by which the Department of Health and Children can access additional expert advice from paediatric nursing and aims to give paediatric nurses an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the policy making process. It is composed of paediatric nurses from a variety of practice setting and who work in various capacities from student to Director of Nursing.

### 3.5 Transfer of Student Nurse Application System to CAO

The application system for places on the nursing registration diploma programme was transferred to the CAO from 2001. An Bord Altranais worked closely with the CAO to effect the transfer.

### 3.6 Intake of Nursing Students

A total of 7383 offers were made to 3290 applicants in 2001, with an acceptance of 1747 (including 22 deferrals).

Total registration in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): 1648 for 1547 places.

This resulted in a number of Schools of Nursing being oversubscribed by a total of 101 nursing students. The Department of Health and Children provided additional funding to cover the cost of supporting the extra students.

**General Nursing**

A total of 3115 offers were made to 2502 applicants with an acceptance of 1199 (including 16 deferrals).

Total Registration in HEIs: 1141 for 1042 places.

**Psychiatric Nursing**

A total of 2345 offers to 1745 applicants, with an acceptance of 364 (including 3 deferrals).

Total Registration in HEIs: 342 for 305 places.
Mental Handicap Nursing
A total of 1923 offers to 1435 applicants, with an acceptance of 184 (including 3 deferrals).
Total Registration in HEIs: 165 for 200 places.

The Monitoring Committee is delighted at the high uptake of places on both the General and Psychiatric nursing education programmes. However, it is disappointed that 35 of the available places on the Mental Handicap nursing programme were not filled.

An improved support package for nursing students was implemented during 2001 at a total full-year cost of £1 million (€1.27 million). This included an increase in both the annual maintenance grant and external clinical placement allowance.

3.7 Pre-registration Nursing Degree Programme

The Minister for Health and Children, on 1 November 2001, launched the new four-year undergraduate pre-registration nursing degree programme commencing in 2002.

The Government has approved a capital building programme totalling £176 million for the construction of purpose-built facilities to accommodate nursing degree students at 13 Higher Education Institutions throughout the country. This programme is due to be completed by September 2004. The Government has also approved the additional revenue funding required to support the new degree programme. This will rise to €33.75 million by 2005.

To coincide with the introduction of the degree programme the Government has provided funding for an additional 93 places annually as follows:

15 General and 20 Psychiatric nursing places at Institute of Technology Tralee / Southern Health Board.
18 Psychiatric nursing places at Athlone Institute of Technology / Midland Health Board.
20 Mental Handicap nursing places at Letterkenny Institute of Technology / North Western Health Board.
20 Mental Handicap nursing places at Waterford Institute of Technology / South Eastern Health Board.

A total of 1640 places nationally will be available annually on the degree programme. This will result in a combined nursing student population of 6,560 over the four years of the programme.

The Minister also announced a new sponsorship scheme for experienced public health care assistants wishing to train as nurses. Up to 40 sponsorships will be available annually. Successful applicants will be allowed to retain their salary during the four years of the degree programme, in return for a commitment to work as nurses for their public health service employer following graduation.

Funding totalling £260,000 has been provided for local marketing of the new degree programme. Health Boards/ERHA to co-ordinate campaigns in association with Schools of Nursing and Higher Education Institutions.
The Monitoring Committee warmly welcomes these developments.

**3.8 Effective Utilisation of Professional Skills of Nurses and Midwives/Development of Appropriate Systems to Determine Nursing Staff Levels.**

A Working Group, representative of health service employers and nursing unions, was established to address the two recommendations of the Commission on Nursing relating to (a) the effective use of the professional skills of nurses and midwives and (b) the development of appropriate systems for determining nursing staffing levels.

A report documenting the Working Group’s deliberations in relation to its first term of reference was published and widely circulated during 2001. The main recommendation of the Working Group was that the grade of Health Care Assistant/Maternity Health Care Assistant be introduced as a member of the healthcare team to assist and support the nursing and midwifery function. The Working Group’s report has been endorsed by the Monitoring Committee.

A separate Review Group on Health Service Care Staff was convened during 2001 to establish standard criteria for the education and training of care assistants, as recommended by the Commission on Nursing. This Review Group has been informed by the work of the Working Group, including its recommendations relating to the education and training of health care assistants. The National Council for Education Awards (NCVA) training programme for health care assistants commenced on a pilot basis at a number of sites throughout the country in Autumn 2001.

The Working Group’s deliberations on the development of appropriate systems for determining nursing staffing levels will be the subject of a subsequent report.

**3.9 Clerical and IT Support for First Line Nursing and Midwifery Managers**

During 2001, an additional of **£7.5 million (€6 million ongoing and £1.5 million once-off)** was allocated among health agencies for the provision of clerical and information technology support to first line nursing and midwifery managers. This brings to £14.3 million (€18.16 million) the total funding provided for this purpose since 2000.

**3.10 Clerical and Information Technology Support for PHNs**

During 2001, an additional **£1.4 million (£0.5 million ongoing and £0.9 million once-off)** was allocated among the health board for the provision of information technology and clerical support for Public Health Nurses. This brings to £3.3 million (€4.19 million) the total funding provided under this heading since 2000.

**3.11 Empowerment of Nurses and Midwives/Management Development**

The Minister for Health and Children established a High Level Steering Group on the Empowerment of Nurses and Midwives in February 2000. The purpose
was to devise an agenda for the meaningful involvement of nurses and midwives in the management of services. The Steering Group identified four central themes to drive this agenda forward: management development; service planning; communication and meaning of empowerment. Sub-groups have been established to advance work on each of the themes and develop action plans. In particular the work of the management development sub-group impacts on the preparedness of nurse managers for their key role as human resource managers.

Pilot management developments programmes catering for CNM2, CNM3 and middle level nurse managers were commissioned in 2000 and 2001. Over 250 nurses and midwives have completed or are in the process of completing programmes, which are being externally evaluated. The intention is to roll out the management development programmes by preparing detailed guidelines (content and provider assessment) so that health service employers can commission similar programmes throughout the health system. A pilot programme for CNM1’s in a health board area is currently being planned.

The sub-group on empowerment commissioned a national study to explore nurses’ and midwives’ understanding of empowerment within the context of the public health services. This large-scale study is being undertaken by a research team at Dublin City University. It is anticipated that the final report of the study will be published in 2002. The findings of the study will provide very useful insights that can be used in developing strategies that will empower and retain nurses and midwives in practice.

3.12 Equity in Financial Support for Nurses/Midwives undertaking Education Courses

The following new initiatives under this heading were announced by the Minister for Health and Children during the year under review:

Payment of fees and enhanced salary to nurses/midwives undertaking higher diploma and certificate courses in all specialised areas of clinical practice.

Financial support for State Enrolled Nurses undertaking Nursing Conversion Programmes.