
PNA WARNS OF IMPACT OF EARLY RETIREMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES NATIONALLY

In a survey of its branches across the country the Psychiatric Nurses Association (PNA) has found that up to 360 frontline nurses are to retire from the psychiatric/mental health services under the Government's early retirement scheme.

This amounts to about 9% of whole time posts in the services and in some areas the figure for those retiring rises to 10% and more of whole time posts. These figures are in addition to an estimated 1,200 staff who have left posts in the last two years.

Commenting on the PNA survey, General Secretary, Des Kavanagh said the Government, patients and their families had to recognise that current provision of mental health services are not sustainable with this level of staff losses.

"The impact of these staff losses will be felt across all services but particularly in community services which are being heralded by the Government as the future for our mental health services. Against this background, any talk of developing enhanced preventative and primary care services is nonsense when we cannot maintain core services."

He said urgent action was needed to release the Government's promised €35 million for mental health services to recruit new staff in order that existing services can be maintained.

"It is now critical that the Minister of State with responsibility for Mental Health, Kathleen Lynch intervenes to ensure that this Government commitment is delivered upon, and that recruitment of nursing staff begins immediately."

Mr Kavanagh said the loss of staff under the February retirement scheme is just the latest blow to services.

"On top of the latest exodus the HSE are demanding additional so called 'efficiency cuts' of between 4% and 5% which equates to cuts of between €28 million - €35 million in 2012.

The PNA survey is the first to quantify the impact of the early retirement scheme on psychiatric services across the country. Taken together with staff already lost to the services since 2009 today's survey shows:

- North Dublin Mental Health Services -38 vacancies will remain to End February
On Monday 34 patients with only 24 beds in Acute Unit Fairview
- Cork - 54 out of 540 nursing staff to retire
- East Galway - Numbers reduced from 317 to 200 to end February
- Roscommon - Numbers reduced 116 to 78 since 2009 and 15 more to go to end Feb.
- Monaghan - No replacement of retiring Community staff
- Clare - Numbers down from 214 to 163 since 2009 with 6 more to retire.
- Limerick - Numbers from 285 to 217 with 18 to retire to Feb.

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