

NORTHERN AREA HEALTH BOARD

Report No. 4/2001

In-patient services for Older Persons, Northern Area Health Board.

In August 2000 the Northern Area Health Board submitted a comprehensive A&E Winter initiative plan to address the anticipated problems the acute hospitals in the Northern Area Health Board would face in the upcoming winter.

As early as June in the same year, the Northern Area Health Board had additionally contracted 43 new beds in private nursing homes, both to assist the acute hospitals and to offset the effect of the beds which were temporarily closed in the Board's public hospitals/homes for older persons due to a chronic shortage of training nursing staff. The current status of their temporarily closed beds is as follows:-

St Mary's Hospital	77 beds
St Clare's Home	39 beds
Sean Chara Community Unit	16 beds

Update on Status of Health Board in-patient Beds:

In an effort to address the severe shortage in nursing in all hospitals/homes, and particularly in hospitals/homes for older persons, a strategic plan was put in place in the summer of 2000 to secure staff overseas in conjunction with a major recruitment agency experienced in that field. As a result an interview team comprising of 2 Directors of Nursing and senior recruitment agency staff visited the Philippines, week commencing 12th October 2000 to interview potential nursing candidates.

This exercise succeeded in panelling 87 Philippine nurses who committed themselves to working in services for older persons in the Northern Area Health Board.

It is expected that the first contingent of these nurses, 15 to 20, will commence their 6 week acute hospital based training in February 2001 and will commence working in units for older persons at end of March 2001. The remaining nurses will come to Ireland on a phased basis over the following months.

A&E Winter Initiative:

Sixty-one additional private nursing home places have been allocated to the Acute General Hospitals over the period October 2000 to date as the first phase of the A&E winter initiative. This is in line with the target set by the Northern Area Board when formulating the A&E plan. Our Board has now a total of 332 contract beds in Private Nursing Homes.

In addition to this, it is targeted to take out a further 74 contract beds for older persons and 20 contract beds for young chronic sick and behaviourally disturbed young persons from a current date until March 2001. On going discussions will continue with the Eastern Regional Health Authority to ensure that adequate funding is provided to cover the cost of these beds.

It is targeted that these additional contract beds will play a significant role in elevating the pressure in the acute general hospitals, and allow older persons who have been medically assessed as requiring non acute hospital care transfer to move to more *appropriate levels of care.

This arrangement will also complement the overseas recruitment drive, which will assist in bringing the temporarily closed public beds back on stream from March 2001 onwards.

M. Windle

Chief Executive

18th January 2001