



Minister Stephen Donnelly, TD
Minister for Health
Department of Health
50 – 58, Block 1, Miesian Plaza,
Baggot Street Lower,
Dublin 2, D02 XW14

Copy via email to: ministersoffice@health.gov.ie

18th July 2024

Re: Regional Director of Health & Social Care Professions
HSE / Health Region Restructuring

Dear Minister Donnelly,

I am writing to you with regard the current HSE restructuring. As you know plans are underway to stand up six Health Regions in line with the recommendations made in the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare Sláintecare Report (2017). As part of this transition Fórsa have been engaging with the HSE, through the industrial relations machinery of the state, on several issues of significant and serious concern.

It has become clear through that engagement that there is significant disagreement about the role that Health and Social Care Professions (HSCP) will play in the Health Region Structure. The HSE have formally advised in recent weeks that the decision of the HSE board is to exclude HSCP staff from a role on the Senior Management Team at Health Region level. They intend to proceed with a Regional Clinical Director post for Medical staff, a Regional Director Nursing & Midwifery for Nursing and Midwifery staff and a Regional Director of Population and Public Health. HSCPs, who are the second largest clinical group, are to be excluded from this integral management structure.

Such a position is in direct contradiction to the stated aims of Sláintecare which envisions integrated delivery of care in the right place at the right time. HSCPs are an essential part of that shared goal and their exclusion from senior operational management structures will serve only to delay the achievement of Sláintecare objectives. It is in our view, an entirely retrograde step to allow to happen. Fórsa have yet to receive a clear rationale from the HSE for this exclusion.

When we sought more information from the HSE as to how the Board reached this decision, we were advised they made decisions based on the output of a working group commissioned by Chief Clinical Officer Dr Colm Henry and led by Dr Pat Nash



and Ms Deirdre McNamara. It is our understanding that this working group did not reach consensus nor has any documentation purporting to be the output of this group been shared with Fórsa despite requests for same.

I enclose for your information the position paper of the HSE HSCP Office published in January of this year setting out a very compelling case for the inclusion of HSCPs at this level of management. This position paper is widely supported by our HSCP members, by the relevant professional bodies and by other colleagues within the Health Service.

Including a senior management role, on par with those already agreed for other clinical groups, will provide a diversity of input and expertise that will bring significant added value for citizens who require integrated health services. It is also an essential element of appropriate clinical governance and assurance which is a requirement for patient safety.

It is clear, that a minimum, this decision requires further consideration and discussion. The current restructuring will likely shape the face of healthcare in Ireland for the next two decades. It is imperative that it is done with the best interest of citizens in mind and not based on professional rivalry or parochial empire building. All staff have an integral and important role to play in the delivery of Sláintecare and the new structures must reflect that at all levels.

When you addressed our conference in May 2023 and spoke to our HSCP members, your support of their work was clear. Our members are now asking for your direct intervention in this matter. We would very much welcome a meeting with your office to discuss the above concerns in more detail.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Kelly".

Linda Kelly
National Secretary

cc. Mr Ciarán Devane, Chairperson, HSE Board
Mr Bernard Gloster, CEO, HSE
Ms Anne Marie Hoey, Chief People Officer, HSE
Mr John Delamere, NERS, HSE
Mr Michael O'Leary, Department of Health
Ms Fiona Steed, Chief HSCP, Department of Health