

**INTERIM REPORT OF
NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK
FORUM**

MAY 2001

8

HSEA/Dept. of Health & Children/IMPACT

1. Service Pract. posts
2. Clerical Admin services

Introduction

The National Social Work Forum was established by the Minister for Health & Children in November 2000. The background to the establishment of the Forum lay in the concerns expressed by the Social Work profession as to the implications of changes arising from the implementation of the "Children's First Guidelines" and other legislative measures and the view of the profession that changes arising from these developments cannot be implemented effectively until a number of issues have been addressed.

The Forum's objective has been to address the issues in a structured way.

It was jointly agreed between the parties to produce an interim report outlining progress, thus far on the various issues that have been dealt with within the Forum.

Recruitment and Retention

1. Pay

The Union had raised the fact that the increased duties and responsibilities associated with the "Children's First Guidelines" and other proposed legislative changes warranted increased rates of pay. The management side advised that the issue of pay was not within the remit of the Forum. It was agreed that all issues pertinent to pay would be referred to the Public Service Benchmarking Body.

2. Senior Social Work Practitioner

Agreement has been reached on the introduction of 250 posts in this new grade. These posts which are on a non-replacement basis will attract a differential of £3,000 (in 1 October 2000 terms) over each point of the Professionally Qualified Social Worker/Psychiatric Social Worker salary scale. The following scale in 1 April 2001 will therefore apply:

28875 - 29881 - 30713 - 31554 - 32411 - 33272 - 34145 - 34767 (LSI)

The circular giving effect to this agreement is at Appendix I. The initial allocation of the 250 posts is attached to the circular.

Employers are expected to make arrangements to fill these positions immediately.

The distribution of posts will be based on service requirements and not on seniority and individual employers in consultation with Social Work managers and Hospital Management where appropriate, will have primary responsibility for the implementation.

The role of the Practitioners will vary depending on service requirements. It is envisaged that the Senior Practitioner could specialise in particular areas e.g. refugees, travellers, child protection, Student Training etc., however, the ultimate designation of posts in individual agencies will be dependent on the needs identified in each location.

A number of jobs profiles have been drawn up to assist employers in finalising job descriptions.

It is recognised by both sides that the introduction of the posts shall not have an adverse effect on clinical caseloads.

The effectiveness of the posts will be reviewed following a period of eighteen months.

3. Grading Ratios

It has been agreed that the issues of the ratio of Team Leader positions to the number of Social Workers and the number of Principal Social Worker posts will be re-examined in the light of the outcome of the workload management study mentioned below. This is expected to be available by September 2001.

4. Upgrading of Single-handed Posts

Both sides agreed that the single-handed post should not be confined to the hospital sector but should also apply to certain other specialised posts within health agencies. It was further agreed that the HSEA would write to health agencies requesting that they identify any 'single-handed' social work posts which would merit an upgrading based on existing criteria. To date, not many posts have been identified; further identification needs to take place via (a) continued staff & employer identification of such posts and (b) from the results of the upcoming NSWQB manpower survey (due to be completed in late 2001/early 2002).

Workload Measurement

The forum is conscious of the need to undertake a workload management study for the social work profession. Ms Maureen Lynott has agreed to undertake this task and will work with a small sub-committee of the forum. Nominees to this sub-committee have been made.

It is agreed that this study will examine the following

- ◆ the workload of the team
- ◆ the size and structure of the team
- ◆ the range of responsibilities of the team

A literature review will be undertaken to take account of previous relevant experience both in Ireland and abroad.

It is agreed that the system(s) recommended by the study would be piloted in a number of locations. It is also agreed that grading criteria and staffing ratios cannot be considered in isolation from the issues being considered by this study.

This sub-group is due to meet for a time-limited period starting in May 2001 and concluding by September 2001.

It is acknowledged by the National Social Work Forum that certain duties presently carried out by Social Workers, which do not demand specific social worker skills, could be carried out by other personnel, thus allowing Social Workers to maximise their own skills and time. These areas include:

1. Clerical and Administrative duties
2. Transportation of clients and families, for example, to and from access meetings
3. Supervision of access meetings

The specifics of this area will be addressed by the Workload Management subgroup.

Workforce Planning

The Expert Group report recommended that the National Social Work Qualifications Board's initiative in relation to workforce planning be supported and resourced (rec. 120)

The National Social Work Qualifications Board published its report 'Social Work Posts in Ireland' in July 2000 - it was launched by the Minister in November 2000.

It highlights the need for an additional 200 social work posts in the next two years and 660 posts in the medium term.

Following a series of meetings with the National Social Work Qualifications Board, it was recommended that an additional 68 training places be created. A number of meetings have been held with the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education and Science, and it is hoped that these additional places will be put in place, some from October 2001 and the remainder from January

2002. The Higher Education Authority is in the process of resolving outstanding details with the colleges.

The forum is particularly conscious of the need for a parallel increase in the number of practice placement opportunities for students. The Department of Health and Children conducted an audit of all health service employers, asking for details of the number of placements provided, the additional number that could be provided and the barriers to such provision.

Two main issues arose from this audit. One is the accommodation required to increase the number of students taken and the second is that of social workers being unable to take students because of their workload. The Department of Health and Children will be seeking additional funding to overcome the accommodation difficulties. The audit of employers currently being conducted will also be of assistance in this area. However it must be borne in mind that accommodation is a major issue for employers and that these difficulties will not all be resolved in the short term.

The Department of Health and Children has also secured funding for the creation of a new grade of Social Work Practice Placement Co-ordinator. One co-ordinator will be employed per Health Board area and will be responsible for co-ordinating placements and dealing with any other issues that arise in the placement of students. It is envisaged that a national placement forum would be established, comprising the colleges, the placement co-ordinators, the National Social Work Qualifications Board and any other relevant agencies. The Health Board Directors of Human Resources are enthusiastic about the creation of these places and are currently drafting a job description for this new post. On receipt of the draft, discussions can take place with IMPACT to refine same if necessary.

Discussion has taken place on the need for training for Practice Teachers. It has been proposed that Social Work practitioners taking on student placements for the first time would receive specialist training, and that a more advanced module would be provided for more experienced teachers. A Social Worker taking on such training needs to be fully funded by the employer. In line with Social Workers gaining further qualifications, the question of extra remuneration for taking students on placement will be subject of discussion between the parties. The subgroup to the National Social Work Forum recommended that a reduction in workload of the practice teacher, especially when a student is on placement.

The staff side suggested that students should be paid an allowance to cover their expenses while on placement. The management side agreed in principle that students should receive some financial support in respect of out of pocket expenses incurred while on placement. The office facilities and induction system, as outlined in the subgroup report on Expert Group recommendations 115 – 125, were also agreed at National Social Work Forum level.

Resourcing

The National Social Work Forum recognises the importance of providing good quality accommodation with suitable resources, enabling Social Workers to carry out their job to the greatest effect. Access to information technology is also seen as being of crucial importance to back up the physical environment in which we operate. The measures set out in relation to staff, in the subgroup report to the National Social Work Forum, need to be applied equally in the case of students. The contents of the sub-group report will be the subject of discussion with employers with a view to agreement on an action plan.

Both sides recognised that clerical support to social work teams is inadequate. The management side had requested employers to provide exact data on existing clerical numbers (Appendix 2) so that the level of additional resources required can be assessed.

Management and Development within Social Work

In line with Expert Group recommendation 123, a survey into the competencies required for management positions within the Social Work profession is now being undertaken Pearn Kandola (a firm of Occupational Psychologists, commissioned to do this task by the OHM). This is due to be completed by the end of 2001 and wide consultation with Social Workers is expected to take place. The competency survey is expected to produce generic results, to be applied to the 'paramedical' group – it is expected that the NSWQB will then be able to consider how to tailor or develop the competencies to address Social Work specifically. In relation to recommendations 121, 122, 124 and 125 (dealing with first time managers and personal development planning exercises), the views of the subgroup were agreed at National Social Work Forum level.

APPENDIX 1

To: CEO's - All Health Boards, Voluntary Hospitals, Mental Handicap Agencies

8th May 2001

Re: Senior Social Work Practitioner Grade

A Chara,

I wish to advise that arising from the work of the Social Workers Forum, agreement has been reached between IMPACT and HSEA regarding the introduction of the post of Senior Social Worker Practitioner. The agreement provides for the filling of 250 positions nationally and it is important to note the following criteria which will apply to the posts.

1. Posts will be filled on the basis of service requirements and not on seniority.
2. The posts are to be filled on a non-replacement basis and the introduction of the post must not have an adverse effect on clinical caseloads.
3. The allocation of posts within each agency will be a matter for discussion between management and the Social Work Manager.
4. In order to be eligible to apply for posts at Snr. Social Worker level, the social worker must have 3 years post qualification experience. This requirement is to be waived in the case of those social workers who have recently completed the NQSW Conversion course.
5. The initial filling of posts will be by way of confined competition within each agency.
6. The salary scale attaching to the post will be a differential of £3,060 (at April 2001 rates) on all points of the professionally qualified basic social worker salary scale.

- £28,875
- £29,881
- £30,713
- £31,554
- £32,411
- £33,272
- £34,145

LSI £34,767

7. The effectiveness of the posts will be reviewed after 18 months.
8. The role of the practitioner will vary from agency to agency depending on service requirements, however, it is envisaged that the post holder will specialise in particular areas e.g. Travellers, Refugees, Child Protection etc. The ultimate allocation of responsibility will be a matter for local decision.
9. A number of job profiles have been drawn up and these are attached. It should be noted that these are guidelines towards the drawing up of job descriptions and may be varied to suit individual agency requirements. Core attributes and competencies, entry-level requirements and duties and responsibilities are also included.
10. The allocation of posts to each agency is attached. Employers should immediately begin the process of filling these positions which will have an implementation date of June 1st 2001.

Yours sincerely,

John Delamere
Industrial Relations Executive

ALLOCATION OF SNR. PRACTITIONER SOCIAL WORKER POSTS

North Western Health Board	12
Western Health Board	15
Southern Health Board	24
Sth. Eastern Health Board	17
Midwestern Health Board	15
Midland Health Board	12
North East Health Board	12
NAHB/ECAHB/SWAHB (Division of posts between 3 Area Boards to be agreed by respective Directors of HR).	100

VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

St. Michaels House	3
Bros. of Charity Galway	2
Bros of Charity Roscommon	1
Western Care	1
Brothers of Charity Lota	1
Brothers of Charity Waterford	1
Brothers of Charity Bawnmore	1
Daughters of Charity Lisnagry	1
Daughters of Charity Dublin	1
Sisters of Jesus & Mary	2
Central Remedial Clinic	1
Enable	1
St. John of God	3
Galway County Association	1

DUBLIN HOSPITALS

Beaumont	2
Mater	1
Crumlin	2
Temple Street	2
Coombe	1
National Maternity Holles Street	1
Rotunda	1
Rehab Dun Laoire	1
Tallaght	3
St. Vincents	3
Our Ladys Hospice	1
St. James	4
St. Lukes	1

DRAFT OUTLINE ON THE PROPOSED SENIOR PRACTITIONER POST

▪ Job Title

Senior Practitioner

▪ Core Attributes and Competencies

Demonstrates advanced knowledge and skills within specified areas of practice.
Demonstrates best practice through the process of reasoning and decision-making allowing application of theoretical framework to be applied to complex and difficult cases.
Demonstrates willingness to supervise students on professional practice placements.
Demonstrates ability to participate in evidence based research.
Demonstrates leadership skills.
Demonstrates a critical understanding of the context in which practice occurs within a wider social and political milieu.
Demonstrates ability to act as mentor to existing staff in specialised areas of social work
Demonstrates ability to act as mentor to new entrants to the profession.
Demonstrates an ability to display autonomous work practices within the agency setting.
Demonstrates ability to use evidence-based research and advanced ethical awareness to be applied on an on-going basis to best practice.
Demonstrates ability to liaise effectively across professional and organisational boundaries.
Ability to demonstrate additional skills in a specific field.

▪ Entry Level

PQSW or equivalent plus three years minimum post qualification social work experience.
Post graduate education or further training in a recognised specialist area is desirable.
Recruitment on the basis of competition.

▪ Duties / Areas of Responsibility

Responsibilities will vary across different social work settings but may include the following :

Contributing actively to the development and maintenance of high standards of clinical practice in co-operation and collaboration with the Team Leader and Principle Social Worker.

Contributing to the development, provision and implementation of individualised training programmes for social work staff in meeting organisational goals and objectives in collaboration with the Team Leader and Principle Social Worker.

Responsibility for the planning and supervision of social work students on professional practice placements.

Responsibility for induction of new staff to the agency.

Role in the evaluation of the Service periodically e.g. this may involve looking at existing or future training needs in the agency in meeting organisational goals and objectives.

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Dissemination of specialised knowledge and ethical awareness to existing agency staff.

The provision of an information resource for agency colleagues.

The undertaking of evidence-based research on behalf of the Service.

How a Senior Practitioner Would Function In A Health Board Social Work Team

1. Supervised by Principal Social Worker.
2. Contributing to induction training programmes for newly qualified Social Workers and for Clinical Workers new to the agency.
3. Identify Personnel development plan for new staff in conjunction with team leader and training co-ordinator.
4. Mentoring role for newly qualified social workers and those new to the agency.
5. Specialised knowledge, skills and competencies are retained within the team e.g. recognition of Post Graduate qualifications such as Diploma in Client Protection and Welfare, Diploma in Addiction Studies, Practice teacher development.
6. Recognition of expertise in a specialised field e.g.:
 - Foreign Adoption Assessments
 - Fostering assessments and support, training
 - Clients physical/sexual abuse investigation interviewing techniques.
 - Working with asylum seekers
 - Working with homeless adolescents
 - Family therapy and child guidance assessments.
7. Senior Practitioner post will keep abreast of current practice and act as a conduit for the dissemination of knowledge to the Social Work Department.
8. Senior Practitioner will keep abreast of current and impending legislation and the perceived impact on practice.
9. A knowledge/research and information manager to act as a repository/store house for research papers, conference papers, journals, visas and attached audio visual materials.
10. Supervises students and gives support to colleagues in their supervision of students.
11. Carry a caseload which is commensurate with their duties as senior practitioner.
12. Evidence based research in relation to service development, e.g. continuous statistical analysis of client data for the development of improved social work and client service provision.

Example of how a Senior Practitioner would function in a Hospital SW Team

1. Supervised by Principal Social Worker.
2. Contributing to induction training programme for newly qualified social workers and for social workers new to the agency.
3. Identify Personnel Development Plan for new staff in conjunction with Principal Social Worker and Training Co-ordinator.
4. Mentoring role for newly qualified social workers and those new to the agency.
5. Specialised knowledge, skills and competencies are retained within the team e.g. knowledge and understanding of bereavement counselling (and have appropriate courses in this area), oncology, strike management, specialist knowledge associated with working with terminally ill people, paediatric knowledge, risk assessment in A & E departments, post-natal depression, pre-adoptive counselling, welfare entitlement knowledge, gerontological knowledge.
6. Senior Practitioner will keep abreast of current practice and act as a conduit for the dissemination of knowledge to the Social Work Department.
7. Senior Practitioner will keep abreast of current and impending legislation and the perceived impact on practice.
8. A Knowledge/Research and Information Manager to act as a repository/store house for research papers/conference papers, journals, videos and other audio visual materials. This information should be available on line within the agency.
9. Supervises students and supports colleagues in the supervision of students.
10. Carry a caseload which is commensurate with their duties as Senior Practitioner.
11. Evidence based research in relation to service development, e.g. continuous statistical analysis of client data for the development of improved social work and client service provision.

VOLUNTARY SETTING

1. Supervised by Principal Social Worker.
2. Contributing to induction training programmes for newly qualified social workers and for social workers new to the agency.
3. Mentoring role for newly qualified social workers and for those new to the agency.
4. Specialised knowledge, skills and competencies are retained within the team e.g. knowledge of syndromes, chromosomal abnormalities and related medical conditions. Knowledge of specialist services/programmes and entitlements are preserved and retained and available to other team members.
5. Snr. Practitioner post will keep abreast of current practice and act as a conduit for the dissemination of knowledge to the Social Work Department.
6. Working with existing librarian resources, the Snr. Practitioner will work in the capacity of a knowledge/research and information manager to act as a repository/store house for research papers/conference papers, journals, videos and other audio visual materials. This information should be available on line within the agency.
7. Supervises students and supports colleagues in the supervision of students.
8. Carry a caseload which is commensurate with their duties as Snr Practitioner.
9. Evidence based research in relation to service development e.g. continuous statistical analysis of client data for the development of improved social work and client service provision.

2nd April 2001

Personnel Officers
Health Boards/Voluntary Hospitals/Mental Handicap Agencies

Re: Social Workers Forum

Dear Sir/Madam,

As you will be aware, a Social Worker Forum, has been meeting since November last. Amongst the areas that the forum has been considering is the area of Clerical backup Support in the Social Work area and a copy of the Joint Committees recommendations in this regard is attached.

In order that the management side may make an accurate assessment of the cost implications of the recommendations, it is necessary to carry out an audit of the existing level of Clerical Support that is provided by your agency to the Social Work Profession. Accordingly, you are asked to forward the following information to this agency.

1. The number and grades of Clerical Staff, within your Agency, who are currently Dedicated to the Social Work area. (Excluding the Principal Social Worker).
2. The level of Clerical Support available to the Principal Social Worker.
3. The additional numbers and grade of Clerical Staff required by your Organisation to meet the targets set out in the Report, and the estimated cost implications of same for your agency.
4. The arrangements for provision in respect of locum cover for Clerical Staff and the additional costs of providing the amount of Locum Cover Envisaged in the report i.e. for sick and Annual Leave.
5. Any current proposals within your service plans to increase the level of Clerical Staff dedicated to the Social Work Department.

As the forum are anxious to bring this element of its work to an early conclusion, your early response with this information required would be appreciated and in any event not later than Friday 20th April.

Yours sincerely,

John Delamere
Industrial Relations Executive