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Health Division

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For the attention of SIPTU Nursing members within Mental Health Services.

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to provide you with an important update in relation to outstanding issues within mental health services.

As you will note from previous communications, SIPTU Nursing has engaged with the HSE and Department of Health at national level in order to highlight a number of issues arising within mental health nursing. I can confirm that a delegation from SIPTU Nursing has continued to engage with the HSE and Government department today, 28th June 2016 through both a direct engagement and conciliation under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission.

In this regard, I can confirm that the following issues were raised within our agenda during the course of engagement:

- **Pay:** Need to address pay related issues such as application of **incremental credit** for graduates 2011-2015, different treatment of new entrants/beneficiaries re **revised salary scales**, need for application of **Community Allowance** for all nurses in the service, need for standardisation re application of **overtime rates**, need for accelerated **removal of FEMPI** & need for **incentivised arrangements** to attract/retain staff within the service including retirees wishing to stay within the service for a defined period of time.
- **Recruitment:** SIPTU has highlighted the crisis arising given the existing vacancy level of 600+ wte positions within mental health nursing and the increase in this number which will arise from pending retirements.
- **Permanent Contracts:** SIPTU has highlighted our concern with the failure of the HSE to ensure that permanent posts are expedited, instead of temporary options, for nursing staff. SIPTU has also maintained that conversion of existing temporary/agency arrangements should be prioritised in order to afford staff greater job security to staff.
- **Additional Hours:** SIPTU has maintained that part-time nursing staff wishing to increase their hours should be facilitated in doing so.
- **Education/Training:** SIPTU maintained the need for a comprehensive programme which promotes, supports and financially assists education and training programmes within mental health nursing.
- **Advanced Nurse Practice:** SIPTU has called for a robust process to develop the potential benefit of the role of advanced nurse practice within mental health services.
- **Mental Health Nurse Management Review:** SIPTU has again re-iterated the call for a **review of the existing agreement for revised nurse management structures** implemented in 2012.

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- **Agency Spend:** SIPTU has highlighted the inconsistency in policy of the HSE and Government departments with the continued outlay of millions of euro on **agency spend** while a policy of recruitment freeze remains in situ. SIPTU has maintained the need for the employer to revise its policy on **pay point for retired staff** should they wish to remain on within the service for a period of time. SIPTU has opposed the policy of offering staff lower increment points against what were earned pre-retirement.
- **Consistent Policy Application:** SIPTU has called for a consistent approach from the HSE relating to application of policies such as 'Assault at Work'.
- **Crisis Intervention Teams:** SIPTU has called for a comprehensive process to focus on the benefit of rolling out and supporting crisis intervention teams within the service.

SIPTU Nursing has maintained its intent to address these issues within a comprehensive agreement for mental health nursing. In furtherance of same, SIPTU has stated that it will continue to engage with both the HSE, Department of Health in order seek resolution of the issues raised. In addition, SIPTU has called for the direct involvement of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the process to ensure that appropriate decision making responsibility is available to the resolution of issues raised.

We have stated that mental health nursing requires measures which will derive confidence for staff, patients and service users alike. SIPTU Nursing has also maintained that the policies pursued by employers over the past number of years have resulted in a service within which existing staff do not feel valued and indeed confidence to attract future graduates is not secure.

In this regard, I can confirm that SIPTU Nursing will seek to keep all members appraised of any developments which arise in the coming period. We understand the potential for industrial action within the service as and from the 29th June.

We would ask that SIPTU nursing members continue to present to work for their normal roster and only undertake duties which will not interfere with any action which may be implemented.

Please contact your local SIPTU Nursing Official should you require further clarification or guidance. We hope that this communication is of assistance to you. We will, as stated, continue to make every effort to resolve the issues outstanding within mental health nursing and will strive to keep you appraised of developments.

Yours,



Kevin Figgis,
Sectoral Organiser.

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