

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY R.G. LE HERISSIER OF ST. SAVIOUR**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 16th MAY 2006

Question

Would the Minister identify the estimated sums of expenditure which will be needed to complete implementation of the Job Families agreement?

Answer

On Wednesday 8th March 2006, the Staff Side of the Nurses and Midwives Joint Consultative Committee and I reached an agreement which resolved the grievances which the Staff Side had concerning the implementation of the Job Families Agreement. The grievances focused upon the appeal mechanisms included in the Job Families Agreement should Nurses and Midwives be dissatisfied at the point of their assimilation (that is, their assimilation from the old nursing and midwifery grades to the new ones) and various other forms of appeal.

The resolution of the grievance was based upon a mutual appreciation of the fact that the original review mechanisms contained in the Job Families Agreement did not meet best modern practice. Since that agreement was struck, both Management and Staff Sides have been working together to implement the Job Families Agreement in general and these new appeal mechanisms in particular. This work culminated last week when both sides met with a national expert from the English NHS who had accrued many years of experience of implementing a new pay and grade structure which is very much akin to the Job Families Agreement.

Of crucial importance is the recent establishment of a joint Working Party. The remit of the Working Party is to now proceed apace with full assimilation and appointment of nurses and midwives to all of the appropriate grades within the new structure, and to train “a pool” of Staff Side, Management Side and other practitioners in order that they can participate in the appeals process. The national expert was able to give useful advice to the joint Working Party as to how it should conduct its business.

It is in this context that my answer to the Deputy’s question must be considered. Given that the new appeals process is now jointly agreed to be equitable, transparent and open, there can be no artificial constraint or political or managerial “steerage” to fit the cost of the appeals process within the reserved sum. It would not be in the public interest to reveal the reserved sum as there is a danger that it may be seen as some form of ‘pay award’ of which the entirety was earmarked for staff as-of-right. Thus, there are three scenarios –

- (1) the reserve meets exactly the full cost of the appeal mechanisms;
- (2) the reserve has been over estimated (and this will mean that any surplus monies will be returned to the Treasury); and,
- (3) the reserve is insufficient and this will mean that the Health and Social Services Department will have to manage this as a cost pressure balancing the need for the full implementation of the Job Families Agreement against other competing priorities.

The Department is fully aware of the financial risk that is being run (with regard to the third scenario) but has informed the Staff Side that this will not influence the “purity” of the appeal mechanisms, now mutually agreed.