

**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 25th APRIL 2006

Question

Would the Minister inform members –

- (a) of the costs to date of implementing the Nurses Job Families Agreement?
- (b) what has been achieved through this Agreement?
- (c) what remains to be achieved through this Agreement, at what cost and within what deadlines?

Answer

a) The costs to date of implementing the Nurses and Midwives New Grade/salary structure known as the Job Families Agreement are approximately £840,000.

This sum relates to a significant part of the costs attached to the assimilation of staff from the old grade/salary structure to the new grade/salary structure.

It should be noted that additional costs will be incurred in the following two main areas:-

- Appointments to the new grades of grade 2 (equivalent to senior Nurse Auxiliary) and grade 5 (equivalent to Senior Staff Nurse);
- Progression through the increments. Progression through the increments will be determined on an individual basis subject to meeting the entry criteria of their grade and meeting agreed outcome based performance criteria.

b) The Job Families Agreement had been developed by Health and Social Services and employee representatives of the Nurses and Midwives Joint Executive to achieve a number of objectives. The main objectives are given below:-

- Resolution of long term disagreements over pay, terms and conditions of service attached to the whole job of a nurse in comparison to jobs in other public sector pay groups;
- To address the concerns of nurses and in particular nursing auxiliaries, that they were underpaid for the job they were required to perform.
- The development of a coherent career structure for all nurses within the new grade/salary structure.
- The addition of additional grades of nurse (e.g. grade 2 (equivalent to senior Nurse Auxiliary) and grade 5 (equivalent to Senior Staff Nurse)) to meet the needs of the organisation and views of nursing employee representatives;
- To introduce clear “entry criteria” for each grade and resolve long standing concerns by nursing employee representatives attached to the entry criteria used to differentiate between a Sister II and Sister I post in the old grade/salary structure;
- The need to improve performance and reward, in a tangible way, high performing nurses, within a fair and equitable grade/salary structure and performance for all nurses.

The main objectives, intent and quality of the Job Families Agreement was recognised by the Independent Arbitration Panel led by a Chairman from the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service (ACAS) in their

report dated 10th December 2003) as part of the settlement of the 2002/2003 Nurses and Midwives' pay dispute.

At present the Department in collaboration with employee representatives of the Nurses and Midwives' Joint Executive and Family Nursing and Home Care Service is in the process of implementing the Job Family Agreement and creating the managerial and staff side capacity to manage the appeals process.

Following this, a training programme for all nurses (and nurse assessors) will be set up to enable them to understand and prepare for the subsequent performance assessment for pay purposes process.

Until such time as the Job Family Agreement is implemented it is too soon to determine any achievements that might result from its introduction. Notwithstanding this, once the Job Family Agreement is fully implemented the Health and Social Services Department is confident of meeting the original objectives mentioned above.

I think it is also important to state that recent operational issues should not detract from the importance and appropriateness of the Job Families Agreement or the endeavour of both the Health and Social Services Department and employee representatives of the Nurses and Midwives Joint Executive to progress this important project through to completion.

c) The following main provisions of the Job Families Agreement still need to be implemented:-

- Full assimilation and appointment to all grades within the new grade/salary structure;
- Complete the appeals process against assimilation from the old grade/salary structure to the new grade/salary structure;
- Develop and implement a training programme for all nurses (and nurse assessors) to enable them to understand and prepare for the subsequent performance assessment for pay purposes process.;
- Implement the formal assessment for pay purposes process;
- Complete the individual appeals process against assessment for pay purposes process.

Although, the planning process for the above is under way, it is only possible to provide approximate indicative timescales at this stage. For example full assimilation and appointment to the grade/salary structure followed by the appeals process should be completed within 6 months and assessment for pay purposes within another 6 months.

The placement of a nurse within the increment structure is dependant on their individual performance against a transparent and comprehensive set of agreed performance criteria. As a consequence, until that process has been completed it is impossible to predict with any accuracy likely outcomes and therefore additional costs to those already incurred with this project.

Notwithstanding this fact, it is important to state that costs attached to incremental progression in accordance with the performance criteria and the rest of the Job families Agreement will be met by the Health and Social Services Department.