



**Report of the Activities of the
Professional Advisors of the
Nursing Policy Division
Department of Health and Children
2001**



Table of Contents	Page
Introduction	3
Supporting the Minister for Health and Children	4
Advice to Nurses	4
Input into Development of Health Policy	5
Implementation of the Report of the Commission on Nursing	5-8
Professional Leadership	9
Recruitment and Retention	9
Conference Presentations	10-11
Scope of Practice for Nurses and Midwives	12
Empowerment of Nurses and Midwives, An Agenda for Change	13
National and International Representation	13
Education	14
Research	15
Conclusion	16
Appendix 1	17-19

Introduction

This report focuses on the activities of the Nursing Advisors throughout the year 2000, within the framework of the Business Plan formulated by the Nursing Policy Division, and in relation to other professional activities in which they have been involved. The Nursing Policy Division functions as an integrated unit. The professional advisors do not and indeed, could not function in isolation from the other staff within the Division, upon whose help, co-operation and support they rely. The Nursing Advisors wish to acknowledge the welcome, the advice and the expert help that they have been so freely given by their colleagues in the Nursing Policy Division and by all the staff in Hawkins House.

The Report has been compiled to inform those interested within the Department of Health & Children, and also to inform members of the Nursing Profession at large who wonder what we do in Hawkins House. It may also serve as a point of reference for nurses who join the nursing advisory team in “The Department” at a later stage.

The Professional Advisors within the Nursing Policy Division include:

- Ms. Peta Taaffe, Chief Nursing Officer
- Ms. Noreen Aylward-Murphy, Community Nursing Advisor (from Nov 2000)
- Ms. Mary Brosnan, Midwifery Advisor
- Ms. Jenny Hogan, General Nursing Advisor (from Jan 2001)
- Ms Elizabeth Farrell, Nurse Researcher
- Ms. Deirdre Fitzsimons, Community Nursing Advisor
- Ms. Maureen Flynn, Nurse Researcher
- Ms. Anna Lloyd, Paediatric Nursing Advisor
- Ms. Siobhan O’Halloran, Education and Intellectual Disabilities Advisor
- Mr. Michael Shannon, General Nursing Advisor (April 1999 to Jan 2001)

The implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of The Commission on Nursing 1998, constitutes a large part of the work carried out by all staff in the Nursing Policy Division. This will be elaborated upon throughout the text.

Supporting the Minister for Health & Children

This supporting role involves attendance at many national functions and conferences where the Minister is speaking, including the launch of the National Education Forum, Research conference, National Health Promotion Strategy, North/South Initiatives to promote collaboration throughout the island of Ireland. Much time is devoted to the provision of material for inclusion in speeches and answers to Parliamentary Questions. On occasions attendance of the Chief Nursing Officer is required at meetings between the Minister and Nursing Groups. The frequent requests for the provision of written advice on a variety of topics related to nursing and midwifery form a significant part of the daily work of the nursing and midwifery advisors.

Advice to Nurses on the Ground

This is sought from a wide variety of nurses, on a large number of issues including the staffing complements for newly commissioned units or hospitals. Depending on the function of the accommodation being developed, the appropriate nurse advisor will give advice on staffing and structures.

Frequently newly appointed senior nurses require advice or the opportunity to discuss particular problems or issues. This may be the case when nurses are promoted to senior positions that have been created in an evolving nursing career structure with exciting new opportunities. Advice and support may also be sought by newly appointed individuals to existing senior nursing or midwifery managerial posts.

Nurse managers faced with difficult situations of a managerial or clinical nature, regularly seek support and advice from the Nurse Advisory Group and in particular from the Chief Nursing Officer. This reinforces the importance of the accessibility of support for senior nurse managers within the health services.

Input into the Development of Health Policy

The Nursing Advisors have been involved at a strategic level in many of the developments in health policy initiatives within the Department of Health and Children, demonstrating the synergistic potential achieved by incorporating nursing knowledge into the area of health policy formulation. All of the Nursing Advisors are contributing to the new Health Strategy being prepared by the Department of Health and Children in consultation with interested parties.

The strategy for Nursing and Midwifery in the Community now being developed by a project team, led by the Nursing Advisor of Community Nursing, will reflect the New Health Strategy currently being drafted. The Nursing Advisors have been very much involved in formulating and supporting policies for the recruitment and retention of student nurses and registered nurses, in light of the current shortages. The “*Report of the Paediatric Nurse Education Review Group*”, which was initiated and facilitated by the Nursing Advisor for Paediatric Nursing, has been published. A document on the role of Nurses and Midwives in promoting Public Health, “*A Nursing Vision of Public Health*” has been produced jointly by the Nursing Advisors in the Department of Health & Children, Dublin, and the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety, in Belfast.

Implementation of the Report of the Commission on Nursing

The report of the Commission on Nursing published in September 1998, sets out the framework for the future development of nursing and midwifery in Ireland. Implementation of the recommendations of the Commission created a major work agenda for the Department of Health and Children. During 2000 the team of professional nursing and midwifery advisors worked closely with all members of the Nursing Policy Division in leading the changes envisaged by the Commission. This involved providing professional advice during intensive negotiations with the Alliance of Nursing Unions and close collaboration with other bodies such as the Health Service Employers Agency, An Bord Altranais, the Health Research Board, the Office for Health Management and third level organisations.

The nursing and midwifery advisors provided professional advice to the negotiating team during the settlement of the nurses' strike in October 1999. At this time agreement was reached between the Department of Health and Children and the Nursing Alliance on a priority Action Plan for the implementation of core recommendations of the Commission on Nursing during 2000 and 2001 (LCR 16330). During 2000 the advisors were actively involved in progressing the agenda set out in the Action Plan. This section of the review provides an overview of the contribution of nurses and midwives, employed in the Department in the implementation of the recommendations.

Commission on Nursing - Monitoring Committee

The Commission on Nursing recommended the establishment of a committee under the aegis of the Department of Health and Children to monitor the progress of the implementation of the recommendations. The Chief Nursing Officer is a member of the Monitoring Committee, which met on four occasions during 2000.

National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery

The new independent body *The National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery* was established on the 30th of November 1999. Close relationships have been established between the Executive staff of the Council and professional advisors of the Department of Health and Children. The Chief Nursing Officer is a member of the Council and was actively involved in the development of a generic definition of Clinical Nurse / Midwife Specialists. The individual nurse and midwife advisors reviewed applications and provided advice during the process of confirmation of Clinical Nurse/Midwife specialist posts. This work is central to the development of a clinical career pathway for nurses and midwives which is an important element in retaining experienced staff in clinical practice. The professional advisors within the Nursing Policy Division are also involved with the Council in finalising a generic definition of Advanced Nurse / Midwife Practitioners.

Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Units

The Commission recommended the establishment of regional Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Units - one for each Health Board Area. The nurse advisors provided professional input to the development of the job-description for the Directors posts. Members of the Nursing Policy Division participated in the selection process for some of the directors. A mechanism has been established for informal and formal liaison and updates between the advisors and the Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Units. Communication focuses in particular on development of strategic plans for future human resource requirements for the *Study of the Nursing and Midwifery Resource*.

Changes to Nursing and Midwifery Management Structure

The Commission on Nursing identified front line nursing and midwifery managers as a key management grade in the health services which has an enormous impact on the culture of care in a hospital or service. The Commission recommended that should be three levels of nursing management, senior, middle and first line. The framework recommended three grades of first line nursing and midwifery management. During 2000 nurses and midwives working in the Nursing Policy Division provided advice on the revised job-descriptions and particularly the expansion in the number and role of Clinical Nurse/ Midwife Managers 1 (CNM1, CMM 1).

Effective Utilisation of Professional Skills of Nurses and Midwives

The Commission on nursing recommended that health service providers, nursing and midwifery management and nursing organisations examine opportunities for the increased use of care assistants and other non-nursing personnel in the performance of non-nursing tasks. A representative working group has been established by the Department to examine the effective utilisation of the professional skills of nurses and midwives. The nurse advisors participated in the discussions and are assisting in the preparation of a report for presentation to the Commission on Nursing Monitoring Committee.

Study of the Nursing and Midwifery Resource

The Commission on Nursing identified a need to strengthen the workforce planning functions in the Department of Health and Children. The Department acted on the recommendation by setting up a *Study of the Nursing and Midwifery Resource* in December 1998. The aim of the project is to analyse the present position with regard to the nursing and midwifery workforce, to devise a system for the projection of future needs and to plan how these needs may be met. Nurse and midwifery advisors participated in the Steering Group, which met on eight occasions in 2000. The group focused on developing a baseline on nursing and midwifery employment. Part of creating the base line involved conducting a survey to obtain a national overview of the provision of post-registration courses in specialised areas of clinical practice and the number of places available. The Steering Group commissioned a *National Study of Turnover in Nursing and Midwifery* which is being undertaken by a research team led by Professor Geraldine McCarthy in the Department of Nursing Studies, University College Cork. In February 2000 a survey was also undertaken to gain an insight into the provision of return to nursing and midwifery programmes. A survey of nursing and midwifery employment in the independent sector (nursing homes, private hospitals, intellectual disability services, physical disabilities, palliative care services and nursing agencies) was conducted in May 2000 to provide an understanding of the size and requirement of employment in the independent sector. An interim report of the study was published in September 2000, *The Nursing and Midwifery Resource – Interim Report of the Steering Group*. The report identified as an urgent priority the refinement of systems and processes used to supply essential information to ensure that forecasts for future nursing and midwifery requirements are feasible and improve over time. The Steering group also made recommendations for specific initiatives to be undertaken in relation to pre-registration nurse education/training, post-registration specialist education, return-to-practice courses and recruitment of foreign nationals.

Professional Leadership

One of the most important initiatives to positively impact on the nursing profession in recent years, is the establishment of the position of the Chief Nursing Officer within the Department of Health and Children in 1998. This appointment was an indication to Irish nurses and midwives that the profession would be represented at the highest decision-making levels of the health services.

The role of the Chief Nursing Officer significantly strengthens the opportunity for strategic planning and development of nursing and midwifery in Ireland. The profession is in a period of major transition that is underpinned by recommendations made in the Report of the Commission on Nursing. The increase in the number of nurse and midwife advisors from within the health services in 1999, has enhanced the availability of relevant professional expertise to support the Chief Nursing Officer. These posts are appointed on a contractual basis in order to ensure that the advisors maintain close clinical links and to allow a rotation of perspectives and skills into the Department of Health and Children.

The Nursing Policy Division is at the forefront in the provision of strong leadership for the nursing and midwifery professions in Ireland. The division is striving to strengthen the status of nursing and midwifery and to encourage the health services to recognise and make full use of the potential of nurses and midwives. The centrality of professional nurses in the provision of high-quality, accessible, sensitive, efficient health services is endorsed by the Nursing Policy Division in representing the profession at all levels of the Irish health services.

Recruitment and Retention

The issue of workforce planning has been alluded to earlier, in relation to an ongoing focus on the projected nursing and midwifery workforce requirements for the development of the health services. This has been within the context of the work of the steering group of the *Study of the Nursing and Midwifery Resource*.

The nursing advisors have been closely involved with colleagues in other bodies such as The Nursing Careers Centre, managed by An Bord Altranais and the Health Service Employers Agency. This collaboration will assist the process of exploring strategies to address the crucial issues of recruiting professionals from overseas and integrating these nurses and midwives into an increasingly diverse, multicultural health service. A key element of the successful integration and retention of these members of staff will be their inclusion in professional development programmes and equity of access to promotional opportunities. Members of the nursing advisors group are also involved in developing guidelines to assist organisations in best practice for overseas recruitment of foreign nurses and midwives.

Conference Presentations

In the past year, the Chief Nursing Officer and the members of the advisory group have represented the Nursing Policy Division at many national and international conferences and meetings. The Chief Nursing Officer and general nurse advisor represented the Irish nursing profession at the second World Health Organisation Ministerial Conference on Nursing and Midwifery in Europe. This meeting occurred in Munich in June 2000.

The focus of the meeting was to acknowledge the key role that nurses and midwives play in society's efforts to tackle the serious public health challenges of our time. The Ministers of Health of member states in the European region made a joint commitment to supporting measures to strengthen nursing and midwifery.

The Ministers committed to amending legislative and regulatory frameworks, to enable nurses and midwives to work effectively and efficiently as independent and interdependent professionals at all levels of the health system. The presence of the delegation from Irish nursing, led by the Chief Nursing Officer, emphasised the international links being established by the Division. The nurse advisors also formed part of the delegation that attended the World Health assembly in Geneva.

Further international representation by the Chief Nursing Officer, included membership of a delegation from the North and South of Ireland which visited the National Cancer Institute, Washington DC, USA. The objective of this deputation was to observe the implementation of recommendations of the consortium on cancer treatment.

Members of the Nursing Policy Division presented at many conferences throughout Ireland, including the Health Care Informatics Conference, Dublin, The Irish Society for Quality Healthcare, Dublin (Sept. 2000), The Association of Irish Nurse Managers Meeting, Belfast (Oct. 2000). Other conferences included the Nursing and Midwifery Research Conference in Trinity College, Dublin (June 2000), the Association of Irish Ward Sisters Conference and the Irish Nurses Organisation Theatre Nurses Conference, An Bord Altranais Annual Seminar: Mental Handicap Nursing, the Association of Nurse Managers in Learning Disabilities Annual Conference.

The work of the Professional Advisory Group within the Nursing Policy Division has been integral to the implementation of the recommendations of the Report of the Commission on Nursing. As a result of this programme of implementation, many positive changes have occurred in the involvement of nurses and midwives in the management of the health services. The Advisory Group has also worked to create opportunities for motivated individuals who wish to work in partnership with the group, to shape the future direction of nursing and midwifery in Ireland.

Scope of Practice for Nursing and Midwifery

In recent years, the professions of nursing and midwifery have been evolving rapidly as part of a paradigm shift in the standards of health care delivery. These improvements mirror developments in the wider socio-economic environment within which nursing and midwifery are practiced.

The practice of nursing and midwifery requires a dynamic responsive approach, in order to effectively contribute to health and social gain in Irish society. There was general recognition within the profession that a review of the Scope of Practice for Nursing and Midwifery was essential in order to support the nursing and midwifery professions in this era of change.

The project, initiated by An Bord Altranais in October 1998, was completed and ‘The Review of Scope of Practice for Nursing and Midwifery’ was published in 2000. The Nursing Policy Division, led by the Chief Nursing Officer, provided much support and advice to the project team throughout and was closely involved in the consultative process as the project developed. The Nursing Policy Division is delighted to endorse the work of the ‘Scope of Practice’ team as an excellent resource for all nurses and midwives practicing in all areas of an increasingly complex and diverse health care system in Ireland.

Empowerment of Nurses & Midwives – An Agenda for Change.

In February 2000 the Minister for Health and Children established a group entitled Empowerment of Nurses and Midwives Steering Group – An Agenda for Change. The purpose of the group is to devise an agenda for change, which will facilitate nurses and midwives at all levels to become involved in a meaningful way in the operational and strategic management of their respective health care institutions. Four subgroups have been established to address the issues. These are:

- The Meaning of Empowerment.
- Management Development
- Communications
- Service Planning

National and International Representation

The national and international dimensions of the work of the Nursing Policy Division are being developed through the creation and maintenance of linkages and working relationships with a variety of health related agencies and organisations. These linkages are vital to the professional nursing advisory function of the Division. They serve to inform the work of the Division and to strengthen the status of Irish nursing and midwifery in a national and international context. The Nursing and Midwifery Advisors serve on a large number of committees addressing a diverse range of topics with relevance to Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland.

During 2000 the Nursing Policy Division devoted considerable energy to broadening and deepening the networks it has created throughout Ireland. In order to further develop a platform for Irish Nursing and Midwifery in the international arena a concerted programme of development has been initiated.

Appendix 1– gives a brief outline of current national and international linkages and of committees served by the Advisors.

Education

The Minister for Health and Children established the Nursing Education Forum in February 1999 and charged it with responsibility for developing a strategy for the implementation of a four year, pre-registration nursing education degree programme. The Nursing Policy Division was represented on the Forum, the final report of which was launched in January 2001.

The advisors in the Nursing Policy Division will continue to be actively involved in pre-registration nurse education developments through representation on the Inter-Departmental Steering Group and the National Implementation Committee convened earlier this year. Both of these groups address issues relating to the proposed establishment of a pre-registration nursing degree in 2002.

In tandem with the above developments members of the Nursing Policy Division have been actively involved in providing advice in relation to negotiating the transfer of nurse teachers from the health service to the third level sector in preparation for 2002.

Several educational initiatives have also been developed in an attempt to enhance the professional development of nursing and midwifery. The Nursing Policy Division was actively involved in providing advice in relation to the initiatives detailed below;

- Payment of fees to qualified nurses and midwives undertaking a relevant undergraduate degree
- Expansion of the theoretical content of the current midwifery education programme from thirteen to twenty-six weeks.
- Representation on the Steering Group for the pilot direct entry midwifery education programme which commenced in June 2000

- Development of a support package for nurse tutors who wish to undertake a Masters programme
- Introduction of a Nurse Tutors course provided by the University of Ulster conjunction with the Irish Nurses Association
- Identification of and support for the development specialised courses in clinical practice.

In an attempt to provide direction to the development of post-registration education in mental handicap, a needs analysis was conducted. Advice has also been provided in relation to issues external to nursing but which impact on the development of the profession. In 1999 a brief submission was made to the Department of Education and Science in respect of the Green Paper on Adult Education: *Adult Education in an Era of Life Long Learning*. Similarly the Division was represented on a group engaged in the future education and training of phlebotomists.

Research

The Commission on Nursing made several recommendations in relation to Nursing and Midwifery Research. During the year 2000 the nurse advisors were actively involved in making arrangements for the expansion of a dedicated budget to the Health Research Board for the Nursing and Midwifery. This money was used to sustain and increase the Clinical Fellowships for Nursing and Midwifery commenced by the HRB in 1999. This year monies have also been made available for the development of a nursing/midwifery research unit/programme of work. The nurse advisors also made a submission to the Health Research Board in response to developing a Strategy for Research and Innovation for Health.

Several independent studies/literature reviews have also been commissioned by the Health Research Board on behalf of the Nursing Policy Division. These include the following.

1. An evaluation of the role of the clinical placement co-ordinator.
2. An exploration of the meaning of empowerment from the perspective of nurses and midwives.

3. An international review of the use of care assistants and other non-nursing personnel in the performance of non-nursing tasks in relation to the effective utilisation of the professional skills of nurses and midwives.

The Commission also recommended that the Department of Health and Children, in consultation with appropriate bodies, draw up a national strategy for nursing and midwifery research. In response to this recommendation Ms. Peta Taaffe, Chief Nurse convened a consultative committee to draft a research strategy for nursing and midwifery in Ireland. The objectives of the strategy include the development of a database of Irish Nursing and Midwifery research and the identification of nursing and midwifery research priorities for the short, medium and long-term.

Members of the Nursing Policy Division engage in a number of related professional activities which enhance the diversity of professional advice available to both the Department of Health and Children and the profession as a whole. These include acting as external examiner to a number of nursing programmes and representation on the editorial boards of the following journals, *The All Ireland Journal of Nursing and Midwifery* and *The Journal of Learning Disabilities*.

Conclusion

The Professional Group of Nurse Advisors has produced this report as a method of communicating the diverse nature of the work undertaken by the Nurse Advisory Group throughout the past year. As the networks of communication become more firmly established between the Advisors, the Department of Health and Children and the stakeholders within the health services, the role of the Nurse Advisory Group will develop further. The evolving opportunities for professional nurses and midwives to influence developments in health care policy formulation, including the development of the forthcoming New Health Strategy, are an important step in reflecting the integral contribution to be made at the highest levels by nurses and midwives in the Irish health services.

Appendix 1. International and National Representation / Influence

One of the central functions of the Nurse Advisors within the Nursing Policy Division is to create and maintain links with health and other organisations.

1. National and International Linkages.

National
An Bord Altranais
Association of Irish Nurse Managers
Association of Nurse Lecturers in Ireland
Catholic Voluntary Nursing Homes Organisation
Children in Hospital Ireland
Dublin Academic Teaching Hospitals - - Director of Nursing Group
European Registration of Congenital Abnormalities
Federation of Voluntary Bodies in Mental Handicap
Health Research Board
Health Service Employers Agency
Health Service Providers
Higher Education Authority
Independent Hospital Association
Institute of Community Nursing
Institute of Public Health
Irish Heart Foundation
Irish Nurses Research Interest Group
Irish Nursing Homes Organisation
National Council for Education Awards
National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing & Midwifery
National Council for Vocational Awards
North/South Community Health Nursing Initiative (Newry)
Nurse Teachers Group in Mental Handicap
Nursing Alliance

Office for Health Gain
Office for Health Management
PPARS Project Team
Quality Assurance in Nursing Association
International*
Chief Nursing Officers Group, U.K & Ireland
European Operating Room Nurses Association (EORNA)
International Council of Nurses
International Federation of Nurse Educators (FINE)
National Cancer Institute, Washington
Permanent Commission on Nursing (PCN)
Royal College of Nursing (UK)
Royal College of Midwives (UK)
Sigma Theta Tau
United Kingdom- King's Fund Leadership Programme
World Health Organisation
European Union

* In order to strengthen the international dimension of the Nursing Advisory function, work commenced in 2000 to establish formal and on-going linkages with key organisations.

2. Conference Attendance

The nursing advisors represented the Nursing Policy Division at a wide range of conferences and meetings within Ireland.

International Meetings;

- 4th Annual *Magnet* Hospital Conference, Seattle.
- The European meeting of the Foundation for Quality Management, The Hague.
- Paediatric Nursing Conference, Bristol.
- Midwifery: Recruit, Retain and Return, Royal College of Midwives, London.

3. Committee Membership

Committee
North/South Primary Healthcare Initiative (C.A.W.T.)
Medical Manpower Forum (observer)
Study of the Nursing and Midwifery Resource - Steering Group
Research Strategy
Effective Utilisation of the Professional Skills of Nurses and Midwives
Review Group on Health Service Care Staff.
Monitoring Committee (Implementation of the Recommendations of the Commission on Nursing)
Empowerment of Nurses and Midwives Steering Group – an Agenda for Change.
National Midwifery Advisory Forum
An Bord Altranais, Midwifery Sub-Committee
Direct Entry Midwifery Steering Group, (T.C.D., Rotunda, Louth/ Meath Hospitals)
Paediatric Nurse Education Review Group
Paediatric Nursing Advisory Forum
Committee exploring training and education for phlebotomists.
Quality Health Care Forum
Project Team - Health Strategy 2001
Interdepartmental Steering Group (Pre-registration Education)
National Implementation Committee (Implementation of the Recommendations of the Nursing Education Forum)
Multi-disciplinary entry to Public Health Nursing.