

Government Decision on Non-filling of Vacancies

Title: Government Decision on Non-filling of Vacancies

Date: 23 April 1987

Document Type: Circular 8/87

Link: Circular 17/87

From: Department of Health, Ireland

To: Chief Executive Officer, Each Health Board

To: Secretary/Manager, Each Public Voluntary and Joint Board Hospital

To: Administrator, Each Home for the Mentally Handicapped

Re: Government Decision on Non-filling of Vacancies

A Chara

Further to the letter of 6th instant in above, it has been agreed by the Ministers for Finance and Health that the Government's decision on the non-filling of vacancies may be implemented in the Health Service on the basis set out below.

1. Reduction in staff numbers on payroll:

The Government's decision should now be implemented in your organisation by reducing the number of staff by between 31 March, 1987 and 31 December, 1987. It is expected that the bulk of the reduction will be effected through the non-filling of vacancies arising in the period referred to. Insofar as it is considered not possible to effect the reductions in this way, the remaining posts must be found either through a reduction in current temporary employment, or in the level of locum cover. The particular combination of these three elements - vacancies, temporary employment and locum cover - must be agreed with the Department within a week of this communication. In the meantime locum cover may be provided where this is considered absolutely essential and in the knowledge that a reduced level of locum cover is to form part of overall staff savings sought.

2. Base-line as at 31st March, 1987:

The base-figures against which the reduction in numbers is to be measured, will be determined by the Department within a week in the light of (i) the recent census returns and (ii) the reply to the Department's letter of 6 April, 1987.

3. Progress reports:

3.1 Overall position:

Progress towards meeting the required reduction in staffing must be reported to the Department on a monthly basis. Each organisation will be required to supply each month a report setting out the reduction made in the preceding month by grade and cost centre, together with the consequential payroll savings. The documentation required to enable you to make this report will be issued within the next few days. The first report, which is to cover the period 31 March 1987 to 30 April 1987, must be forwarded to the Department by 8th May 1987.

3.2 Filling of Vacancies on permanent basis:

Requests for approval for the filling of all posts will be required. (See paragraph 6(2)).

4. Failure to meet targets:

The Department will require that steady progress will be shown in each monthly report towards achieving the overall staffing reductions. The flexibility allowed under these arrangements will be withdrawn if your monthly reports indicate that you are not on target to meet the reduction in staffing outlined.

5. Approval to monthly action:

Formal approval to the action taken by your organisation in the preceding month - given following an examination of your monthly report - will be made available to the appropriate auditors (together with this document) and will form part of the audit process for 1987.

6. Exemptions:

6.1 Contractual arrangements entered into by your organisation prior to the effective date of the Government's decision - 31 March 1987 - may be honoured provided that (i) such arrangements are made in writing; (ii) equivalent savings in staff are made elsewhere before the new staff are taken on and (iii) such staff can be employed without exceeding your 1987 financial allocation.

6.2 Specific critical vacancies may be filled provided that (i) the filling of such vacancies is considered by your organisation to be essential; (ii) equivalent staff savings are made elsewhere before the post is filled; and (iii) the post can be filled within your 1987 financial allocation.

6.3 Commitments entered into in relation to the provision of training for certain grades may be honoured provided that this is consistent with (i) remaining within the 1987 financial allocation for your organisation and (ii) your service plans for 1987 in the light of that allocation.

A separate letter of even date is being issued on the arrangements to apply to student nurses

6.4 Local Appointments Commission (where statutory requests received prior to 31st March 1987). Discussions regarding the status of these competitions are being held with the commission.

7. Career Breaks:

Staff will continue to be entitled to career breaks as heretofore but ensuing vacancies can only be filled if (i) your organisation is on target to meet its 1987 staff reduction requirement, and (ii) your 1987 financial allocation is not endangered. Those due to return from career breaks in 1987 may be offered an extension of their career break (up to maximum of two years) or be allowed to return provided suitable vacancies are available.

8. Spreading of reductions:

Every effort is to be made to spread staff reductions evenly across the grades and "front-line" staff should be protected as much as possible in the interests of maintaining services.

9. Overall financial requirement:

The measures outlined above relate only to the implementation of the Government's decision on the non-filling of vacancies. They may not be sufficient to enable your organisation to remain within its 1987 financial allocation: in that case other measures will be required and those should be notified to the Department in response to the letter of allocation given to you earlier this month.

Overtime levels will be monitored to ensure that the arrangements in this circular will be adhered to.

10. Position of "Choice-of-Doctor" scheme:

No vacancies may be filled without the express approval of the Minister for Health with the consent of the Minister for Finance.

11. Liaison:

All queries in relation to the above should be directed in the case of health boards and homes for the mentally handicapped to Mr. John Quinn (Extension 583)/Mr. Jim Clarke and in the case of voluntary and joint board hospitals to Ms. Sylvia Kelly (Extension 558)/Ms. M. Drury.

Mise le meas,

J. Hurley

Assistant Secretary

Personnel

23 April 1987