



**Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta, Acmhainní Daonna**

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí Sláinte

Ospidéal Dr. Steevens'

Baile Átha Cliath 8

**Office of the National Director of Human Resources**

Health Service Executive

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**To:**

- Chief Executive Officer**
- Each National Director**
- Each Assistant National Director HR**
- Each Assistant Chief Finance Officer**
- Each Hospital Group CEO**
- Each Hospital Group Director of HR**
- Each Chief Officer CHO**
- Each Head of HR CHO**
- Each CEO Section 38 Agencies**
- Each HR Manager Section 38 Agencies**
- Each Employee Relations Manager**
- Each Group Director of Nursing & Midwifery**
- Each Group Director of Midwifery**
- Each Clinical Director**

**From:** Anne Maire Hoey, National Director Human Resources

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020

**Re:** HR Circular 40/2020: Sponsorship for Public Health Service  
Employees wishing to train as Nurses/Midwives

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Dear Colleagues

This circular supersedes *Circular 009/2010 - Sponsorship for Public Health Service Employees wishing to train as Nurses/Midwives*

For the purposes of this circular an employing organisation is a statutory (HSE) or voluntary (Section 38) agency in the Irish public health service in which the employee is working when they commence the sponsorship. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- an acute/non-acute hospital
- a community care area

- intellectual disability services
- a long-term care facility
- a mental health service.

The provisions of this circular are dependent on the availability of funding and resources. The capacity to sponsor applicants each year will ultimately be based on organisational priorities, available funding and organisation policy.

The number of sponsorships available each year will be determined by the Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director (ONMSD). The National Lead for the operation of this sponsorship scheme will be notified of the places available at the commencement of each year.

## 1. Eligibility

1.1 This funding initiative is available to employees in the Irish Public Health Services currently encompassed under the support services grades such as Health Care Assistants/Multi Task Attendants who are involved in the direct delivery of care to patients/clients within a nursing/midwifery context.

1.2 Applicants must have:-

at least **two** consecutive years relevant<sup>1</sup> service as an employee in the Irish public health service within the last five years on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January of the year in which they apply for sponsorship.

*and*

be employed as a permanent employee on a full-time or part-time basis. Where employed on a part-time basis, they must have been working an average of not less than 15 hours per week

*and*

must have a satisfactory service record and fulfill the relevant service requirement. This must be verified by the applicant's employer on the sponsorship application

*and*

must qualify as a Mature Code Applicant on 1<sup>st</sup> January in the year in which they apply for a place on the pre-registration Nursing/Midwifery Degree Programme under the system operated by the Central Applications Office (CAO) on behalf of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

*and*

must have applied for a nursing/midwifery degree programme through the CAO in the area of care in which her/his employing agency is involved in delivering i.e. General Nursing or General and Children's Nursing

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<sup>1</sup> Relevant service is defined as being involved in the direct delivery of care to patients/clients within a nursing/midwifery context

(Integrated) or Intellectual Disability Nursing or Psychiatric Nursing or Midwifery

*and*

undertake and successfully pass the written assessment test administered by Public Appointments Service (PAS) on behalf of the Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI).

1.3 This funding initiative is **not** available to:

- Employees who are not directly involved in the delivery of care to patients/clients within a nursing/midwifery context.
- Employees who have deferred acceptance of a CAO place on a pre-registration nursing/midwifery degree programme from a previous year.
- Employees who have withdrawn from a pre-registration nursing/midwifery education programme within the five-year period immediately preceding their application for sponsorship.
- Employees within a public health service whose service do not employ nurses and midwives within their approved staffing complement.
- Agency staff or those employed in Section 39 organisations, private hospitals, private nursing homes or GP practices.
- Persons who are currently undertaking a pre-registration nursing/midwifery degree programme.
- Non-EU/EEA applicants who do not have authorization to work permanently in the state.

## 2. Application Process

An eligible employee intending to apply for sponsorship must:

2.1 Firstly make a formal application through the Central Applications Office (CAO) as a Mature Code Applicant, for a place on the pre-registration Nursing/Midwifery Degree Programme at one of the thirteen Higher Education Institutions that are involved in the delivery of the programme. The CAO Handbook and application forms are available from the CAO. This can be accessed from [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)

*and*

2.2 Register and apply to [publicjobs.ie](http://publicjobs.ie) to undertake the written assessment test administered by the Public Appointment Service (PAS) on behalf of Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) [www.publicjobs.ie](http://www.publicjobs.ie)

*and*

2.3 Apply for sponsorship to the HSE through the Office of the National Lead for the Sponsorship Scheme (**see Section 3 below**).

**N.B.** The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) information booklet ***Nursing/Midwifery a career for you***, contains valuable information including details of all key dates for applicants to nursing and midwifery programmes together with details on the training places available throughout the country. This

booklet is available from the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) [www.nursingcareers.ie](http://www.nursingcareers.ie)

### 3. Application for Sponsorship to the HSE

Having completed steps 2.1 and 2.2 above an eligible employee intending to apply for sponsorship must:

- 3.1 Submit a completed sponsorship application form to the National Lead for this scheme by the designated closing date. Further details and information can be accessed on the following link: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/about-us/onmsd/cpd-for-nurses-and-midwives/onmsd-sponsorship-schemes/public-health-service-employees.html>
- 3.2 Submit the PAS written assessment test score to the HSE National Lead for this scheme once available. Mature code applicants are notified by the PAS of the result of their written assessment in early June.
- 3.3 Only those who satisfy the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 1 of this circular will be considered for sponsorship.

### 4. Award of Sponsorships

- 4.1 An order of merit list of eligible applicants for each region is drawn up on the basis of their scores obtained in the written assessment test carried out by PAS.
- 4.2 The first applicants to be considered for sponsorship are those who receive an offer of a place from the CAO in Round A in early July of the year of application.
- 4.3 Sponsorship within the approved complement may be awarded to eligible applicants who:-
  - 4.3.1 are placed highest in order of merit on the PAS **written assessment test** in each region
  - and*
  - 4.3.2 who have been offered a place by the CAO on a pre registration nursing/midwifery degree programme in the area of nursing/midwifery in which her/his employing agency is delivering.
- 4.4 The relative positions of applicants with equal scores on the order of merit list should be determined by reference to the length of their respective relevant service<sup>1</sup> in the Irish public health service.

- 4.5 If sponsorships are still available to be awarded following Round A, the procedure outlined above should be repeated in respect of applicants for sponsorship who receive an offer in the next round.

## **5. Conditions of Sponsorship**

### **5.1 Service Commitment**

Successful applicants for sponsorship will be required to give a written undertaking to their employing public health service employer that they will:

5.1.1 following successful completion of the undergraduate nursing/midwifery degree programme, immediately register as a nurse/midwife with the NMBI

5.1.2 following satisfactory selection procedures commit to work as a nurse/midwife for that particular employer for a period of five years' service, accepting the terms, conditions and salary associated with a staff nurse/midwife position.

- 5.2 HSE employees directly involved in patient/service user care who are not directly attached to a nursing/midwifery department will be facilitated sourcing nursing/midwifery employment by National HR based on identified service need.

- 5.3 In exceptional circumstances, all or a portion of the five-year nursing/midwifery service commitment may, with the prior agreement of the public health service employer concerned, be given in the employment of an alternative Irish public health service employer.

- 5.4 A sponsored employee who fails to honour his/her written undertaking to work as a nurse/midwife for his/her employer for a period of five years immediately following successful completion of the nursing/midwifery degree programme and registration with NMBI shall be required to repay to the employer on a pro rata basis the value of the salary received by him/her during (a) academic semesters and (b) all supernumerary clinical placement periods outside of those semesters.

- 5.5 Each employer has responsibility for ensuring compliance with the service commitment contract.

### **5.6 Part-time Employees**

5.6.1 Part-time employees who are awarded sponsorship will be required to become full-time employees for the duration of the nursing/midwifery degree programme.

5.6.2 Following successful completion of the programme, an employee may, with the prior agreement of their employer, be permitted to work on a part-time basis provided the contractual commitment is not less than half-time (i.e. 0.5 WTE).

### 5.7 Availability for Work

Sponsored employees will be required to work during all periods outside of academic semesters, except when they are on annual leave or undertaking supernumerary clinical placements as part of the nursing/midwifery degree programme.

### 5.8 Annual leave

Sponsored employees shall retain their annual leave entitlements throughout the nursing/midwifery degree programme. However, annual leave may only be taken outside of academic semesters and allocated clinical time in full consultation with the sponsoring employer.

### 5.9 Funding

- 5.9.1 All participants will have their registration fees paid as part of this sponsorship.
- 5.9.2 A sponsored employee who already holds a primary degree or is not covered under the Department of Education & Skills free tuition fees initiative, will be required to pay her/his own third level tuition fees.
- 5.9.3 A sponsored employee who commenced, but did not complete an undergraduate programme within the last five years will be required to pay the third level fees in respect of the academic years in question.
- 5.9.4 No funding will be provided for the repeat of module(s), units of study or examination(s). All associated costs must be borne by the sponsored employee concerned.

### 5.10 Retention of Salary

- 5.10.1 A public health service employee who is sponsored in accordance with the terms of this circular will remain on the payroll of her/his public health service employer.
- 5.10.2 She/he will retain her/his existing substantive basic salary throughout the four years of the nursing/midwifery degree programme and will continue to be entitled to normal incremental progression up to the maximum of that scale, up until full registration with the NMBI and taking up duty as a staff nurse/staff midwife.
- 5.10.3 Sponsored employees will not receive any extra remuneration or allowances during the period of training other than premium payments where appropriate.
- 5.10.4 During the interim period between programme completion and full NMBI registration, participants will have an employment commitment on the terms and conditions of their substantive post.

### 5.11 Repeat Year

- 5.11.1 A sponsored employee who is required to repeat a year of the nursing/ midwifery degree programme must remain in employment with her/his public health service sponsoring health service employer for that year, working in her/his substantive grade, with

the exception of time required for theoretical instruction, clinical instruction or examinations.

- 5.11.2 The sponsorship arrangement in relation to salary and fees will be discontinued for the duration of the repeat year but will recommence after the employee has successfully completed the repeat year.
- 5.11.3 However, salary will be paid in respect of time actually worked for the health service employer during the repeat year.
- 5.11.4 A sponsored employee who is required to repeat any element of the programme will also be required to pay her/his own associated third level fees.
- 5.11.5 The local NMPDU\* must be notified with immediate effect in respect of repeat elements of the programme. The local NMPDU\* should subsequently notify the ONMSD in respect of funding implications.
- 5.11.6 An employee who does not remain in employment during a repeat year will have her/his sponsorship terminated and will be required to repay all moneys received under the sponsorship as determined by the employer. Such repayments shall be made to the public health service employer where she/he was employed.

#### 5.12 Repayment of Salary and Registration Fees

A sponsored employee who does not remain in employment with the sponsoring employer during the period of the degree will have his/her sponsorship terminated and will be required to repay salary and fees as outlined in 5.13.

#### 5.13 Discontinuation or Non-completion.

A sponsored employee who discontinues or otherwise does not complete the programme will:

- (a) if remaining in employment with the sponsoring employer be required to repay to that employer all third level fees paid on his/her behalf over a period determined by that employer, and
- (b) if not remaining in employment with the sponsoring employer be required to repay to that employer on a pro-rata basis the value of the salary received by him/her during:
  - (i) academic semesters, and
  - (ii) all supernumerary clinical placement periods outside of those semesters, and
  - (iii) all third level fees paid on her/his behalf.

#### 5.14 Governance

The sponsored employee will be required to provide their employing agency and their local NMPDU\* office with evidence of successful completion of the programme.

#### 5.15 Exceptions

A sponsored employee absenting themselves, and/or failing to complete the programme due to unforeseen or exceptional circumstances, may be

facilitated at the discretion of the employing agency and higher education institute to complete the programme and examinations in such manner as may be specified.

#### **5.16 Additional Costs**

All other additional costs, charges and expenses, including travel, text books and library charges incurred by the sponsored employee undertaking the programme will be discharged by the sponsored employee at their own expense.

### **6. Sponsoring Health Service Employers' Responsibilities**

- 6.1 The applicant's employer must accept the conditions attached to the sponsorship as outlined in Section 5 of this circular.
- 6.2 The employing agency undertakes to comply with the conditions of sponsorship and has responsibility for ensuring the sponsored employee's compliance with their sponsorship agreement and service commitment.
- 6.3 The employing agency is responsible for notifying their local NMPDU\* of the candidate's plan to withdraw from the programme or defer any part of the programme. Failure to do so may result in overpayment.

### **7. Sponsored Employee Obligations**

- 7.1 The sponsored employee undertakes to comply with the conditions of sponsorship as outlined in section 5 of this circular and with the terms and conditions outlined in the sponsorship and service commitment agreement signed by them and their sponsoring employer.
- 7.2 The sponsored employee will attend in full the programme with due diligence and will undergo such examination and tests as may be prescribed in or required by the programme curriculum with a view to successfully completing the programme.
- 7.3 The sponsored employee will return to work for his/her employing agency during all periods outside of academic semesters except when on approved annual leave or while on clinical placement as part of the degree programme. The sponsored employee will liaise with his/her employing agency regarding same.
- 7.4 The sponsored employee will undertake to notify his/her employing agency should they intend to withdraw or defer any part of the nursing/midwifery degree programme.

### **8. Starting Pay for Sponsored Students**

- 8.1 Starting pay for Sponsored students who progress to Registration on the



NMBI register will be in accordance with the HSE HR Circular (Circular 11/2008) <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hr-circulars/>

## 9. Review of Initiatives

This initiative will be kept under periodic review.

## 10. Queries

Any queries in relation to this circular should be addressed to The Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director, Dr Steevens' Hospital, Dublin 8. Tel. 01 6352241 John Scott Email: [john.scott@hse.ie](mailto:john.scott@hse.ie)

Yours sincerely



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**National Director of Human Resources**