

Your union needs you!

In his new role as organiser, Albert Murphy is set to enhance INMO structures in the major hospitals. Tara Horan reports

IF YOU ever wanted to become more involved in the INMO, now is the perfect time. The Organisation is working to enhance its structures and wants to hear from members on the ground and workplace representatives on what their union can do for them.

Albert Murphy has been appointed as organiser, with the aim of leading the development of workplace structures in large hospitals in the run-up to the restructuring of the health service into hospital groups. Albert will be working in conjunction with the designated IRO for each hospital, to identify key representatives in each workplace and ensure they have all the necessary support and training to undertake their roles effectively.

He will also be working towards setting up hospital committees and hospital group committees to improve communications within and between hospitals in the same group.

In the first phase, Albert will be concentrating on large hospitals in the Dublin area. His aim is to encourage all reps to become more organised and active.

The INMO now has an IRO assigned to each of the hospital groups. The idea is that the designated IRO will have their finger on the pulse on what is happening throughout the group.

"My new role will be an exciting challenge to try to refocus the Organisation's structure to encourage greater participation by members and reps at local level.

Part of my brief is in relation to the training of local reps, which we see as a key step in giving them the skills, knowledge and confidence to represent people effectively at local level, in conjunction with the IROs.

"While the INMO's membership continues to grow, we obviously must continue to recruit members. There's a significant turnover of nursing and midwifery staff in hospitals and we have to ensure we are recruiting the replacement staff.

In relation to training, the INMO has basic and advanced level courses for hospital reps. The courses outline practical scenarios based on real life cases that have ended up before the Rights Commissioners. Participants learn how the INMO deals with such cases.

"We will be making contact with our reps through the hospital and branch structures and asking them what their needs are training-wise and what way committees can be set up to energise members on the ground.

"The key challenge in terms of IR post-Haddington Road will be representing people in terms of conditions of employment at local level. We need to ensure we can control that and the reps have the skills to negotiate if there are going to be changes.

"Organising members and encouraging them to become active is a key priority. We want to persuade members to become trade unionists and to protect the nursing and midwifery professions.

"We have seen some evidence of CEOs trying to introduce changes which have not been agreed nationally. When the hospital groups are up and running, there is likely to be a different emphasis between the groups as to how they deal with their resources. I imagine there will be competition within the groups and we'll have to make sure that there's a consistent approach across the hospitals and it's not used as another opportunity to pare back on the terms and conditions of nurses and midwives.

"It is also very important for the INMO to be organised in the private sector, within private hospitals, care homes and general practice. The latter will be particularly important as the PCCC (Primary Community and Continuing Care) areas are expected to grow," said Albert.

"We need to develop structures to encourage people to join the INMO. Very often people aren't aware of the union and people might use the INMO for professional development and that can be their route into the Organisation."

Albert has worked closely with his immediate colleagues Edward Mathews and Philip McAnenly in the Dublin area over the past eight years. He is looking forward to working more closely with the rest of the IRO team in Dublin and his colleagues around the country in his new role.

In addition to his new role as organiser, Albert continues as the IRO designated to the Mater Public and Private hospitals and Bon Secours Hospital, Glasnevin.

Albert has a strong background in trade union organisation. Before joining the INMO as an IRO in January 2008, he worked with three other trade unions, including 12 years with Mandate.

He began his career as a civil servant in the Department of Social Welfare. It was during the recession of the 1980s that he became involved in the CPSU (Civil Public and Services Union), where he worked for several years. He moved from there to the ASTI (Ireland's main second level teachers union) for two years, and then into Mandate, where he dealt with major retailers such as Tesco and Dunnes Stores.

He studied industrial relations in the National College of Industrial Relations and did a postgraduate diploma in Keele University. He made the move to the INMO in 2008; at the time the Organisation had just won the 2007 dispute when it obtained a reduction in working hours.

Albert lives in Dublin with his wife, Anne, and two children.