



Graduate deal hits papers

The INMO's opinion of the government's graduate recruitment programme was expressed in several media outlets recently

THE INMO continued to receive good media coverage over the summer in a range of stories on various topics, including the government's graduate recruitment initiative and flooding at Letterkenny General Hospital.

Graduate scheme

Union: HSE forcing nurses to take 'de facto' 15% pay cut – was a headline in the *Irish Examiner* (August 2). "Young nurses whose two-year contracts come to an end may be forced to accept a de facto 15% pay cut if they want to continue in employment. The situation which has been referred to the Labour Relations Commission over claims it breaches the Haddington Road Agreement was revealed yesterday by the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO).

"According to an internal HSE management memo obtained by the union, the service is attempting to push new nurses into accepting 'graduate' deals in a bid to save money.

"Currently, graduate contracts – which pay 85% of normal salaries in the first year and 90% in the second year – are only provided to nurses who have recently entered the workforce. The deals were meant to be used only to replace expensive agency workers and overtime issues. However, according to the memo, the system could now be extended to nurses who already have two-year contracts due to budget problems.

"Speaking to RTÉ, Dave Hughes, INMO deputy general secretary, said "the situation is a strong arm tactic designed to cut costs, and breaches the recently signed Haddington Road Agreement".

"Barry O'Brien, HSE human resource director, said the situation will exist for nurses "whose contracts expire and they wish to continue in employment", but denied that medics are being forced into accepting the cut-price deals.

"However, he admitted nurses who currently have one or two-year unapproved

contracts and are replacing overtime and agency staff will be employed through the graduate scheme."

The Cork News (August 2) also reported on the issue – **Unions claim nurses are being 'bullied' into pay cut**. Dave Hughes said: "If you are going to have a graduate scheme, there has to be opportunities. This is purely a cheap labour scheme".

He added that "between 400 and 600 nurses expected to graduate in Cork this September will be competing with nurses who graduated in 2011 and 2012 for 1,000 positions".

He said: "It's likely that the nurses won't apply and the HSE will have to hire them at 100% of the pay rate."

Letterkenny General Hospital

The flooding at Letterkenny General Hospital was covered in the *Donegal Democrat Thursday Edition* (August 1) – **Quick thinking 'saves lives'**.

The INMO, in conjunction with other unions, issued a statement saying that "the quick thinking of staff and management to the impromptu flash flooding certainly saved lives... staff and management are to be congratulated for continuing to deliver services under very difficult circumstances."

The unions said "there has been a heroic response from hospital staff, gardai, fire services, army, council staff and community volunteers. Although major questions need to be answered, we should all be grateful for the unselfish response of those involved.

"We are reassured by the public commitments given by the minister and health bosses to ensuring that Letterkenny General will come through these dark days and be reopened in full and back delivering its much needed diverse and wide ranging health services to the people of the North West".

Universal social charge

An opinion piece by Dave Hughes, INMO deputy general secretary, appeared

in the *Sunday Independent* (July 14) – **Nurses ask multinationals to pay USC**.

According to Mr Hughes: "Multinational corporations engaged in tax avoidance schemes should be compelled to pay the universal social charge (USC)."

He said that "firms like Google, Apple and Starbucks should pay the charge, if not voluntarily then through legislation. It is quite astonishing that at no point has any government, since the collapse of the economy, even considered imposing any form of levy on that sector."

He added: "It is time for the multinational corporations to come to the table which they have studiously avoided and make a contribution."

Tallaght Hospital

INMO industrial relations officer, Derek Reilly, was quoted in an article in the *Irish Mail on Sunday* (July 14) – **Our sickest hospital? Overcrowding in Tallaght 'worse than ever' a year after HIQA report**.

He said: "It is my view, and that of the nurses, that the situation is worse now than before HIQA went in. On the ground it is worse now than ever. I think some wards should be closed down, they are unsafe."

Agency nurses' pay

The *Irish Examiner* (July 13) reported on agency nurses' pay in the story – **Firms 'cannot adjust' agency nurses' pay**.

"The country's largest nursing union has warned companies with agency nurses that they have no right to impose the terms of the Haddington Road Agreement on those nurses.

Phil Ní Sheaghda, INMO director of industrial relations, said: "The Haddington Road proposals are a collective agreement for employees of the public service... It is the INMO's position that you cannot adjust the rate of pay of any agency nurse as you do not have the authority."

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