



Further Progress since the Health Services Report 1983 – 1986 was published in April, 1986

There have been many developments, some of them major ones, in the six months since the *Health Services Report* was published. These developments are summarised here using the same format and page references as in the Report itself.

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Foreword

A major statement on the future approach to Health Policy, which goes well beyond the bounds of the health services, was issued on 16th December, 1986. It has been distributed widely for observations to those concerned with the provision of health care and to those whose areas of activity or spheres of influence impact on the health status of the Irish people. Following receipt of observations it is intended to prepare a more definitive statement as a basis for a national conference on health policy.

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Finance

As well as the various information systems already listed, an Obstetric Data Collection System is now being implemented in the Coombe Hospital, Dublin.

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Legislation

Adoption: a short Bill has been circulated which will extend the circumstances in which children, including legitimate children, may be adopted. This will help children who have been persistently abandoned, ill-treated or neglected by their natural parents.

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Family Planning: since the 1985 Act came into operation in October, 1985, seven of the eight health boards have adopted plans for the development of their family planning services. More voluntary family planning clinics have been established in 1986 with some financial assistance from the Department of Health; and the Irish College of General Practitioners is introducing a new training programme in family planning for G.P.'s.

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An Bord Altranais: the first meeting of the new Board took place in September, 1986. The Board has already established a Fitness-to-Practice Committee, a Special Committee to report on the operation of a central application bureau for nursing entry and an Ethical Committee.

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The Health (Amendment) Act, 1986 which enables hospital charges to be made in case of road traffic accidents came into force on 7th May, 1986.

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Children (Care and Protection) Bill, 1986: the Dail has established a special committee of 11 Deputies to undertake detailed examination of the Bill. This Committee met first on 24th September, 1986.

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Tobacco Products Regulations, 1986: as part of the comprehensive programme of controls on tobacco, the Minister introduced regulations in May, 1986 imposing tighter controls on tobacco advertising, sponsorship and sales promotion. These came into effect on 1st December, 1986 and external tobacco advertising on shop fronts will be prohibited from 1st December, 1987. A Bill to prohibit or restrict smoking in a variety of public places and to strengthen controls on sale of cigarettes to children has been circulated.

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The Clinical Trials Bill has concluded all Stages in the Seanad.

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European Communities (Cosmetic Products) Regulations, 1986: these Regulations are now finalised.

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General Hospital Services

Of the major hospital developments already listed, the new medical services block consisting of X-ray, pathology, out-patients and casualty departments at Portiuncula, Ballinasloe was opened in October, 1986. Two new operating theatres and full support services at St. Nessian's orthopaedic hospital Croom have also been opened.

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The new Cardio-Thoracic Surgery Unit at Cork Regional Hospital had completed 128 procedures up to mid-October, 1986. Funding has now been provided for a cardiac investigation unit at Galway Regional Hospital.

Tenders for a major development at Ardkeen Hospital, Waterford were approved on 31st December, 1986.

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Community Protection

Measles immunisation: an uptake of 90% has now been achieved and there has been a significant drop in hospital admissions due to measles complications.

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AIDS: a booklet on AIDS prepared by the Department has now been circulated to all doctors in the country and the H.E.B. has published an AIDS leaflet for the general public.

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Food hygiene: three food premises were closed by the Minister where conditions were a serious risk to public health. A leaflet on hygiene in butcher shops printed in co-operation with the H.E.B. was distributed to the trade.

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Misuse of drugs; youth and community development: drop-in centres have been established in the Neilstown and Inchicore areas of Dublin.

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Community Health

The Agreement between the Department of Health and the Federation of Irish Chemical Industries on the cost of drugs and medicines has been renegotiated and is operative from 1st July, 1986 to 30th June, 1988. As a result of the Agreement, the trade prices of most drugs and medicines fell by about 9% in August and better discount terms are now available on drugs bought by the health services.

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Health Centres: the 1986 programme provided for an extra 15 health centres in smaller towns bringing the total in this programme to 52.

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A national scoliosis screening programme is now being introduced. It is being organised from Our Lady's Hospital, Crumlin.

CHAPTER 7 — PAGE 70

Community Welfare

A Working Party on Health and Welfare Services for the Elderly has been set up by the Minister and had its first meeting in September, 1986. It is to review developments in services since 1968 and plan ahead for the next 20 years. The National Council for the Aged has recently published reports on Nursing Homes for the Elderly, Transport for the Elderly in Rural Areas, and other topics.

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Day care services: by 1985 these catered for 6,680 children.

Services for the Handicapped

The Commission on Social Welfare has published its recommendations on income maintenance provisions for the disabled.

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Additional funds were provided to the Eastern Health Board to bring residential accommodation in Ballyraine House, Arklow into use in October, 1986.

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The 14 bed extension to the Barrett Cheshire Home, Dublin was opened in June, 1986.

Psychiatric Services

Day facilities have been opened in Longford, Athlone, Tullamore, Kilrush, Claremorris and Ballina and are in planning in many locations including Finglas, Swords, Cherry Orchard, Castledermot, Kildare, Birr, Clonmel, Limerick, Sligo and Killarney.

A total of over £2m. has been allocated for 1986 under the minor capital schemes to improve the living accommodation for long-stay psychiatric patients.

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Agreement has been reached with the South Eastern Health Board concerning the provision of a 20 bed acute psychiatric unit in Carlow and requirements for additional community psychiatric services in Co. Carlow are being worked out. Similarly in Co. Kildare the planning of a 30 bed acute psychiatric unit at Naas General Hospital is underway. This unit will be built by April, 1988 and in the meantime a temporary admission unit is being provided in Kildare town and Castledermot. Discussions are continuing with the Western Health Board concerning the provision of an acute psychiatric unit at Roscommon County Hospital and the expansion of community psychiatric services in Co. Roscommon.

General

The income limit for the hospital services card was raised to £14,500 from 1st June, 1986 and the health contribution limit was raised to £14,000 from 6th April, 1986.

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Career breaks: from March, 1984 to July, 1986 2,732 staff took career breaks.

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In August, 1986 the Minister established the Health Research Board. This Board became operational on 1st January, 1987 and has taken over the research activities of the Medico-Social Research Board and the Medical Research Council.

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The National Co-ordinating Committee on Drug Abuse set up to advise the Government on general issues relating to the prevention and treatment of drug abuse has published its First Report (June, 1986).

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Since the Report was published, 15 more Statutory Instruments have been promulgated.