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National Doctors Training and Planning annual report 2023

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NATIONAL
DOCTORS
TRAINING
& PLANNING

Annual Report 2023



**National Doctors
Training & Planning**

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the 2023 Annual Report on behalf of National Doctors Training and Planning. In this report, you will find the key activities, achievements and initiatives in 2023. Year on year NDTP continues to build on our goal to improve the life and training of doctors in Ireland.

As I look back on 2023, my personal highlight was the second National Medical Workforce Conference. Leaders from across the health service presented on 'The Impact of HSE Health Regions', a theme which was explored through three lenses - How We Work, How We Train, and How We Live. Over 200 attendees joined us to hear from a wide range of experts as we explored these important themes impacting our medical workforce.



The launch of the Model 3 Hospitals - Consultant Recruitment & Retention Report in 2023 represented an important milestone for NDTP. This project, established in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), aimed to investigate and make recommendations to address the ongoing challenges in the recruitment and retention of consultants across all specialties in Model 3 Hospitals.

The report was launched in November 2023 by Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD at the National Medical Workforce Conference. We are now moving into the next phase of implementation of the key recommendations made within the report.

I am pleased to share that NDTP was acknowledged at various industry awards for innovation in 2023. The National Employment Record (NER) App was Highly Commended at the Irish Healthcare Awards in the category 'Best Use of Information Technology'. NDTP was also featured on the Learning and Development category shortlist for the CIPD Awards in 2024.

In 2023, NDTP released important publications focused on the NCHD experience, key research, and workforce planning data. These included a journal article on doctor retention and the publication of specialty specific workforce planning reviews in Anaesthesiology and Pathology. Supporting and improving the NCHD experience and career development remains at the core of NDTP's work and in 2023 NDTP released the NCHD Guide – Working as a Doctor in Ireland. This resource provides NCHDs with high quality, useful information on working in the HSE as well as practical information for doctors coming to Ireland to work for the first time.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the publication of the Intern Curriculum in 2023. The development of this curriculum, led by Prof Gozie Offiah on behalf of the Medical Intern Board, represents a significant milestone for the intern year. I would like to give my personal thanks to Prof Offiah for leading and delivering this important project.

I would like to thank NDTP's stakeholders, collaborators, and partners from the HSE who work to ensure that our current and future health service is fully equipped with a highly trained medical workforce. I would also like to acknowledge amongst others, the Medical Schools, the Intern Training Networks, the Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies, and the Medical Council for their continued partnership and shared common ambition.

I am proud of the work completed by NDTP in 2023. I wish to thank the NDTP team for the energy and commitment demonstrated throughout the year which led to the important innovations, publications, and overall contribution to the improvement of the NCHD experience in Ireland outlined in this report.

As we look forward to the rest of 2024, NDTP will build upon the work done in 2023 and support our goal of improving the health service through our work in supporting medical workforce planning, doctor training, and career development .

I am excited to see what NDTP will achieve in 2024.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Kinirons". Below the signature is a horizontal blue line.

Prof Brian Kinirons
Medical Director, HSE, National Doctors Training and Planning

OUR STRATEGY

This Annual Report outlines NDTP's key activities, initiatives, and achievements in 2023. This work aligns with the six strategic objectives set out within our Strategic Plan 2022-2027. Our strategy ensures that all significant decisions we make as an organisation are aligned with our strategic objectives. Our ambition is to support world-class postgraduate training programmes and in so doing ensure that the right doctor is in the right place at the right time with the right skills.

NDTP STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. DATA



Improve data quality, consistency & relevance

INVESTMENT

Invest in our data quality, tools, and analytics

QUALITY

Continually improve our data quality to facilitate effective decision making

DATA DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Develop and promote data driven solutions

2. WORKFORCE PLANNING



Generate insights to optimise workforce planning (WFP)

GOVERNANCE

Lead development of governance structures

LEADERSHIP & COOPERATION

Lead and support the development of WFP in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders

PARTNERSHIP

Embrace a partnership approach to support implementation of medical WFP recommendations

EVALUATION & REPORTING

Evaluate and report on medical WFP implementation

REDUCTION IN DOCTORS ON THE GENERAL DIVISION

Liaise with stakeholders with the aim of reducing the number of NCHDs on the general division

3. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT



Ensure High Quality, Progressive, Flexible Training Pathways

NEEDS-BASED

Promote and invest in the development of training to meet future healthcare needs

LEAD NCHD INITIATIVE

Enhance and support the ongoing Lead NCHD programme to develop our clinical leaders of the future

ALIGNMENT

Drive alignment between the training bodies, intern networks, HSE/NDTP, and the clinical sites

CLINICAL EDUCATORS

Support and refine a national network for onsite education and training

PATHWAYS

Support and develop multiple career opportunities and pathways for doctors

ROTATION EXPERIENCE

Improve trainee rotation experience for work-life balance and support the reduction of rotations requiring relocation undertaken during training

5. COMMUNICATION



Advocate for the Strategic Value of Developing Our Doctors

STRATEGY

Develop a communications strategy

CHANNELS

Develop formal engagement channels with our stakeholders to deliver better patient outcomes

ENGAGEMENT

Identify opportunities where NDTP representation or leadership can enhance effective engagement

4. CAREER DEVELOPMENT



Enable Improved Access to Professional Development for Doctors on the General Division

E-PORTFOLIO

Enhance and promote the E-Portfolio for logging and validating experience and career development

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Promote and invest in the professional development opportunities for NCHDs on the general division

MEDICAL CAREERS WEBSITE

Development of a medical careers website

6. RETENTION



Foster inclusive workplaces, flexible conditions, and a culture of innovation and best practice

DATA-DRIVEN

Enhance data analysis and reporting on statistics related to workforce movement

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Proactive engagement and advice on succession planning through data analysis

PROMOTION & AWARENESS

Devise strategies to improve promotion and awareness of upcoming consultant vacancies and opportunities across the workforce

FLEXIBILITY & WELLBEING

Promote strategies that support more flexible working and training arrangements

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Promote strategies that support diversity and inclusion

EMPOWERMENT

Promote strategies that support empowerment of our medical workforce

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

2,382
HST Trainees
(Increase of 99)



662
First Year
HST Trainees



22,775
TSS Applications
Approved



1,966
BST Trainees
(Increase of 88)



31
Leadership &
Management
Scholarships



48
Academic
Track Intern
Posts (100%
Increase)



879
Intern Posts
Available
(Increase of
25 or 3%)



3
National Lead
NCHD
Workshops



40
Aspire
Post-CSCST
Scholarships



285
Commenced
GP Training




1 National Workforce
Conference with
244 Attendees



251 IMGtIs



4
Dr Richard
Steevens' Scholarships



1
Dr Richard
Steevens' Bursary




16
Development
Projects Funded



Glossary

HST	Higher Specialist Training
BST	Basic Specialist Training
TSS	Training Supports Scheme
CSCST	Certificate of Successful Completion of Training
IMGtI	International Medical Graduate Training Initiative
CPD-SS	Continuous Professional Development Support Scheme
CAAC	Consultant Applications Advisory Committee
CCERS	Clinical Course and Examination Refund Scheme



ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTPUTS 2023

Medical Workforce Conference

In November 2023, NDTP hosted the second National Medical Workforce Conference. Leaders from across the health service presented on the future work of our health service in relation to HSE Health Regions.

The conference explored the theme 'The Impact of HSE Health Regions', with an agenda discussing How We Work, How We Train, and How We Live. The engaging agenda of speakers included Dr. Colm Henry, CCO of the HSE along with representatives from the Department of Health and Postgraduate Training Bodies. The MC for the day was Ingrid Miley and we were delighted to also have Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly TD attend to launch the Model 3 Hospitals Report. There was a large attendance on the day and the feedback from attendees was very positive.

NER App Highly Commended at Irish Healthcare Awards

The National Employment Record (NER) App was Highly Commended at the Irish Healthcare Awards 2023 in the category 'Best Use of Information Technology'. The NER was developed by NDTP to allow NCHDs to interact virtually with their Medical Manpower and Occupational Health departments in order to process pre-employment documentation, as well as accessing financial supports for both the TSS and CCERS schemes.

Publication and launch of the Model 3 Hospitals - Consultant Recruitment & Retention Report

Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, launched the Model 3 Hospitals - Consultant Recruitment & Retention Report in November 2023. The Model 3 Hospitals project was established by NDTP, in association with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), to investigate challenges in the recruitment and retention of consultants across all specialties in Model 3 Hospitals and to make recommendations to address the issues identified. In his foreword, Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer, HSE states he is "pleased to see that the report makes several key recommendations to mitigate

these impending challenges". While Prof Brian Kinirons, Medical Director, NDTP notes "this report shines a light on the fragility of the Model 3 network." Mr. Paddy Kenny, Council Member, RCSI advises that "it is now incumbent on us all to work towards implementation in the short and medium term". To download and view the full report [click here](#), while printed copies or summaries are available on request by email to doctors@hse.ie.



Further rollout of the Clinical Educator (CE) / Medical Education & Training (E&T) Model Pilot

A CE / Medical E&T model pilot commenced in September 2022 with the South/ South-west (SSW) and Children's Health Ireland (CHI) hospital groups. The pilot was extended in July 2023 with the inclusion of the Saolta hospital group.

Increased Specialist Training Places

There has been a steady annual increase in recognised postgraduate training posts in line with workforce planning projections. Overall the Basic Specialist Training intake increased by 19% and the Higher Specialist Training intake increased by 14% over the last five year period.

Examples of some of these increases include:

- Total number of doctors currently enrolled in training programmes in 2023 is 5478. This represents a 4% increase in the number of trainees compared to 2022.
- General Practice: There has been a 9.5% increase in first year GP trainees compared to 2022.
- Radiology: 4% growth in trainees in the training programme from 2022.
- Psychiatry: 5% growth in BST trainees compared to 2022.

- General Medicine: 4% increase in trainees across all higher general medicine programmes since 2022.

Increase to TSS Allowance

Following extensive consultation between the IMO, HSE and Department of Health, an increase in the individual TSS allowance per grade was agreed, along with some additions to the list of eligible items. These changes came into effect in January 2023.

Developmental Funding

Each year significant Development Funding is made available to Training Bodies and Intern Training Networks. Development Funding seeks to improve the careers of doctors by funding projects that develop doctors' knowledge and practice, improve education and training, and enhance learning and working environments. NDTP encourages eligible applicants to think critically about some of the recurring issues facing our NCHDs and submit projects that may address such issues. In 2023 continued support was given to stakeholders by providing financial investment in original projects that will contribute to the career development of doctors.

The July 2022 – July 2023 Development Funding cycle has now closed. There were a total of 16 successful projects which received funding. A condition of funding is that each recipient must submit an abstract on the completion of their project. Please [click here](#) to view the full abstract booklet on these projects.

DIME: New Module and Enhancements

DIME and NER System Upgrade

There were significant updates made to the DIME system framework, moving to the latest .NET framework, supported by Microsoft. This did not result in functional changes to the users of DIME and NER but the considerable changes made at the backend of the system resulted in better system performance and maintainability.

Public Only Consultant Contract

The public only consultant contract, implemented in March 2023 resulted in necessary upgrades to the DIME Consultant Post Matching module.

In addition, the development of enhanced reports allows for monitoring the uptake of the new contract.

NER Security Updates

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) was extended to include MS Authenticator App in addition to the existing SMS authentication method. This allows improved access for NCHDs logging on to their NER account from overseas.

DIME Compliance Dashboard

The DIME Compliance Dashboard is a visual summary of selected data relevant to each Clinical Site displayed automatically on screen upon logging into DIME. Users are able to instantly view high-level figures / statistics on the dashboard and use quick links to view further details and manage updates when required.

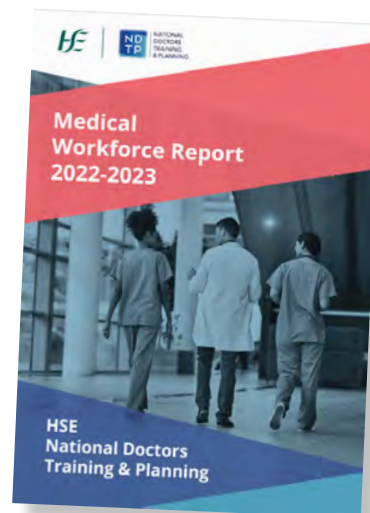
Mandatory Training Matrix

Additional mandatory training certificates introduced to the NER were MAPA (Management of Actual/Potential Aggression) and Mental Health Act 2001. As these certificates only apply to NCHDs in Psychiatry posts these requirements are now automated within DIME.

Medical Workforce Report published

The Medical Workforce Report, published annually by NDTP, gives an overview of the publicly funded medical workforce in Ireland for the given year, as well as highlighting changes in the workforce over recent years.

[Click here](#) to read the 2022-2023 report.



NCHD WORKFORCE

NDTP is responsible for meeting the HSE's legislative responsibilities in medical education and training as set out in the Health Act 2004 and the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 that include, among other things, that:

- The current and future needs of the public health service, in terms of medical training and specialist medicine workforce planning, are assessed, in order to ensure safe, quality patient care; and,
- The medical education and training system reflects, and is responsive to, the changing needs of the health service on a national and on-going basis.

Details are published at www.hse.ie/doctors.

NCHD Training 2023

The HSE is required to assess, on an annual basis, the number of intern posts, and the number and type of specialist medical training posts, required by the Health Service under Part 10 of the Medical Practitioners Act (MPA 2007). The Medical Workforce Report for the 2022-2023 training year, which includes the annual assessment of NCHD posts along with data on the consultant workforce, is [available here](#).

Medical Intern Training

Additional 24 intern posts available in 2023

The Department of Health approved an additional 24 intern posts for the 2023/24 intake bringing the total number of intern posts to 879. A number of the new intern posts established were GP and Academic track posts.

Academic Track Interns Posts doubled in 2023

The Intern Academic Track programme provides the opportunity to undertake a three-month project to enhance skills and experience in clinical research, medical education or leadership, and management skills. The number of posts increased from 24 to 48 in 2023, which required a further investment by the HSE of over €250,000 per annum in the programme.

Basic Specialist Training (BST)

1,966 BST trainees

- 908 BSTs commenced training with our postgraduate training partners in July 2023.
- Intake to GP training increased by 10% in 2023 compared to 2022.
- Intake to General Internal Medicine increased by 2% 2023 compared to 2022.
- Intake to Psychiatry increased by 12% compared to 2022.

Higher Specialist Training (HST)

2,382 HST trainees

- 662 HSTs commenced training programmes across all specialties with our postgraduate training partners in July 2023, a 5% increase on the previous year.
- Intake to Surgery increased by 10% in 2023 compared to 2022.
- Radiology had an overall increase of 4% in trainees in 2023 compared to 2022.

IMGTI

Over 200 IMGTI Doctors training in Ireland

The Irish Medical Graduate Training Initiative enables overseas doctors in training to gain access to clinical experience on a scholarship basis e.g. HSE Scholarship Programme, College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP) / Sudan Medical Specialisation Board (SMSB) or through a fully sponsored Clinical Fellowship or Residential programme. In 2023, 145 Scholarship IMGs and 106 Sponsored Fellowship IMGs trained in Ireland through the initiative, with over 800 doctors having commenced the programme since its introduction.

The HSE and the Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies hosted a delegation from CPSP in September 2023 and held the HSE/CPSP IMG Scholarship Programme Steering meeting during their visit. This was in addition to many online meetings with representatives from SMSB to ensure that their trainees were assisted as much as possible with their travel arrangements which were impacted by the crisis in Sudan. 2023 also saw the inclusion of Emergency Medicine as a specialty for trainees from SMSB.

Scholarships & Fellowships

Details relating to fellowships and scholarships are published [here](#).

Dr Richard Steevens' Scholarships

This programme supports clinical training in recognised centres of excellence abroad and is aimed at NCHDs in the final stages of their HST.

Since the Scholarship was developed and established in 2007, 65 doctors have been awarded Scholarships and a further 27 have been awarded bursaries under the programme. Following an in-depth tracking exercise of past recipients, it was noted there are approx. 70% now working in consultant posts in Ireland.

In 2023, four scholarships awarded with funding provided up to the equivalent Specialist Registrar (SpR) salaries.

2023 Scholarship recipients:

Dr Jessie Elliot, SpR in Surgery, undertook a fellowship in Robotic Oesophagogastric Cancer Surgery based in University Medical Centre, Utrecht, the Netherlands.

Dr Caitriona Gallagher, SpR in Dermatology, undertook a fellowship in Paediatric Dermatology based in St John's Institute of Dermatology, London, England.

Dr Oisín Hannigan, Geriatric Medicine, undertook a fellowship in Geriatric Medicine based in St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, Australia.

Dr Naoimh O'Farrell, Histopathology will undertake a fellowship in Gastrointestinal Pathology based in Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto, Canada.

In addition to the prestigious and highly competitive Dr Richard Steevens' Scholarships, the NDTP HSE also awarded one bursary in 2023:

Dr Lydia Healy, SpR in Paediatrics, undertook a fellowship in Paediatric Critical Care Medicine based in SickKids Hospital, Toronto, Canada.

Aspire Post CSCST Fellowships

Post-CSCST Fellowships offer an alternative to trainees who do not wish to travel abroad but still want to gain this invaluable experience within Ireland. This is now possible as our own specialist clinical expertise and services have matured and developed. These Fellowships provide opportunities for those doctors who have completed specialist training in Ireland to access high-quality training in a specialised area of clinical care. They are designed for doctors who need to acquire additional training or experience which was not available on their Higher Specialist Training programme. The additional training provided exposes graduates of the Irish postgraduate training programmes to subspecialties and advanced clinical skills.

There are currently 40 Aspire post-CSCST fellowships permanently established across the acute, primary care and mental health specialties annually. This programme offers exceptional individuals high quality training and exposure to specialty training and advanced clinical skills in addition to a SpR salary for the duration of the fellowship.

GP Academic Fellowships

The goal of the Fellowship Programme is to support the professional development of future leaders of academic general practice in the Irish health service. It does so by offering a structured three year programme of 1) research, 2) education and training and 3) clinical practice, all overseen by an academic department of general practice.

The scholarship includes salary, contribution towards PhD/MD fees and an annual training and development allowance.

There were two GP Academic Fellows in 2023:

Dr Sarah McErlean commenced her fellowship in UCD in July 2022 and her research project is entitled 'Management of Atrial Fibrillation in General Practice and Integrated Care'.

Dr. Paul Ryan commenced his fellowship in UCC in September 2022 and his research project is entitled 'Characterising Higher-risk Prescribing in People Living with Multi-morbidity and Supporting Clinicians to Reduce Medication-related Harm'.

Leadership & Management Scholarship

31 Scholarships awarded

This scholarship provides part-funding to NCHDs pursuing a Master's Degree in Management and Leadership Skills. In 2023, the scholarship supported 13 doctors in their first year and a further 18 in their second year.

Supporting NCHD Training

NDTP provide a suite of financial supports to alleviate high costs associated with the specialist training and continuous professional development.

Scheme policies and details are published here on our [website](#).

Training Support Scheme (TSS)

22,775 approved applications throughout 2023

Following extensive consultation between the IMO, HSE and Department of Health, an increase in the individual TSS allowance was agreed upon with effect from 9th January 2023 as follows:

Grade	Pre-Increase Allowance Per Year	New Allowance Per Year
Intern	€750	€1250
SHO/Registrar	€1250	€1750
SpR/Psychiatry SRs on a training scheme/GP Registrars	€2000	€2500

It was also agreed that the following changes would be encompassed within TSS funding with effect from 9th January 2023:

- Annual Registration fee for Professional Memberships
- Online Subscriptions to relevant medical publications as deemed appropriate, provided such publications are not available to NCHDs via other sources such as local, university or HSE Library
- Microsoft Office

- Computer Software that has a CME/CPD Component e.g. Statistical Software such as SPSS or alternative
- Laptop/Tablet – A contribution within your TSS allowance of up to €1000 towards the purchase of a laptop OR tablet – available once every 4 years from the date of purchase (as per receipt) from the earliest date of 9th January 2023

Higher Specialist Training Fund (HSTF)

7 Post-graduate Training Bodies Funded

The HSTF fund is available to Higher Special Trainees and is administered through the postgraduate training bodies.

Clinical Course and Exam Refund Scheme (CCERS)

5008 applications logged in 2023

The Clinical Course and Exam Refund Scheme continues to be a central financial support in postgraduate medical training in Ireland. The full fees of eligible courses can be refunded to holders of the HSE NCHD contract (2010).

Continual Professional Development Support Scheme (CPD-SS)

2021 NCHDs enrolled

The CPD-SS is an education programme open to NCHDs registered on the General or Supervised Division working in the public service. The scheme is designed to enhance clinical knowledge and skills and fulfil some of the Medical Council legal requirements under the professional competence, and allows doctors on the General Division access to educational activities worth up to 20 external CPD credits.

The number of NCHDs enrolled (2021) and participating in the scheme in 2023 increased by 6% on the previous year. Over 300 courses are available throughout the training year delivered by postgraduate training bodies; generally over 15,000 CPD credits are attained by NCHDs who are not enrolled in specialist training programmes. A second enrolment which is now established on an ongoing basis, allows a further opportunity for NCHDs to register for the scheme each year. Further development of CPD-SS by training bodies is expected to ensure the offerings that align with the changing health service needs.

Flexible Training

32 NCHDs availing of scheme

The scheme provides for a limited number of supernumerary places to facilitate doctors to continue their training in a flexible manner for a set period of time.

NDTP and training bodies are working together to expand opportunities for Less than Full Time Working (LTFT) to more trainees through job-sharing arrangements. This is also an area being examined by the National NCHD Taskforce.

Developments in 2023 include:

- Applications decreased on the flexible training scheme from the previous year largely due to local arrangements and job shares being facilitated.
- 11 trainees accommodated in NDTP Funded job shares across: Paediatrics, Psychiatry, Dermatology, and Histopathology.
- To encourage job sharing arrangements “top up” funding has been provided through HSE NDTP to allow two trainees to work 0.6 WTE (or 3 days a week) rather than 0.5 WTE.

Lead NCHD (LNCHD) Programme

102 LNCHDs Appointed Nationally

A Lead NCHD represents their NCHD colleagues at an executive level within their clinical site. The role allows NCHDs to have their voice heard at

the highest levels of their local healthcare facility and to gain valuable experience in healthcare management. The LNCHD programme was piloted as a recommendation of the MacCraith Report in 2013. Since its inception it has grown in scale and LNCHDs are now present across most acute hospital sites and community healthcare organisations.

The 2023/2024 academic year saw 102 LNCHDs appointed across 43 hospitals, public health, and CHOs. The programme is overseen by National LNCHD Fellows, Dr Seán Casey and Dr Daniel Creggan.

Highlights:

- 3 face-to-face LNCHD Workshops were hosted in 2023.
- Engagement from LNCHDs across the country was strong and feedback from each workshop was overwhelmingly positive.
- Each LNCHD is provided with a bursary to develop their skills in leadership and management.
- Recognising the expanding number of LNCHD positions and the need to develop an organisational framework to ensure engagement, the National LNCHD Fellows cohorted the LNCHDs based on geographical location.
- The National LNCHD Fellows supported the development and delivery of the Inaugural



Medical Manpower Managers course in November and delivered a session outlining core NCHD challenges and how Medical Manpower Managers can make a positive difference.

- The National LNCHD Fellows represented NCHDs on various national working groups including the Greener Models for Healthcare Working Group, Irish Medical Council Education and Training Committee, and the Ministerial NCHD Taskforce.
- Several site visits took place in 2023. These visits allow representatives from NDTP to engage with the Lead NCHDs and their stakeholders (Medical Manpower Managers, Clinical Directors etc., where relevant) to review areas of strength and areas for improvement in embedding the LCNHD Programme at site level.

NDTP Trainer Leads

There are now 7 NDTP Trainer Leads appointed across 4 hospital groups.

The primary role of the Trainer Lead is to support the delivery of training as appropriate to each clinical site. Trainer Leads have a key role in coordinating training issues at clinical site level and work closely with the Lead NCHDs in their respective hospital groups to act as a central point of contact for all training related issues, particularly from an educational governance perspective and relating to external stakeholders.

In 2023 NDTP confirmed an annual budget for the NDTP Trainer leads to continue to support NCHD education & training at site level.

Clinical Educator (CE) / Medical Education & Training (E&T) Model Pilot

Funding is provided by NDTP for dedicated Clinical Directors in each of the three pilot groups. As well as project management & administrative support for each group (who attended an induction in January 2023), NDTP provides a small capital fund for minor works such as immediate infrastructure improvements to the pilots which has been supplemented in many cases by additional NCHD Taskforce funding. The teams are now largely in place with NDTP/ Steering Group site visits to Cork (SSW) in March 2023 and to Temple Street (CHI) in November 2023 respectively indicating while each group is at a different stage of their three year programme significant or reasonable progress has been made to date.

Academic Clinicians

NDTP, in partnership with the Higher Education Authority (HEA), continued to fund six Academic Clinician posts within medical school academic departments in 2023. These post holders play a central role in curricular reform and development, and the delivery of a modern balanced undergraduate medical training, reflective of the needs and strategic direction of the Irish health service.

MEDICAL WORKFORCE PLANNING

Medical Workforce Planning

In line with its statutory obligations, NDTP is tasked with projecting and proposing, on an annual basis, the number of post-graduate trainees required for each medical specialty. In order to do this NDTP works with specialty stakeholders including National Clinical Programmes, National Service Directors, postgraduate training bodies, senior clinicians and administrators across the acute hospital and community health care system to estimate the total demand for consultants and specialists.

Specialty Specific Workforce Planning

Over the past year, NDTP has worked on medical workforce plans to inform workforce planning for the specialties of Anaesthesiology, Emergency Medicine, the dual-training specialties of Medicine, Pathology, and Surgery. These plans outline the required training and consultant numbers to appropriately staff the Irish medical workforce to meet the needs of the population of Ireland over a specific timeframe. Projections are aligned with future population health needs, clinical models of care and service developments, and are informed by clinical programmes and postgraduate training bodies as well as data on population projections, future service utilisation patterns, and government policy and strategy. A report comprising the six specialties of Pathology was published in early 2023. The reports on Anaesthesiology, Emergency Medicine, Medicine and Surgery were developed in 2023 and are due for publication in 2024.

These reports indicate required increases across all specialties with parallel increases required in training, specifically at HST level. Reports call for the continued development of a consultant delivered service with a focus on the conversion of NTSD posts in favour of increased training posts. This strategy is to be continued into the future to align with government policy and the development of a sustainably trained medical workforce. Workforce planning projections also now align with the development of the new Health Regions and the opening of CHI. To review these reports, please [click here](#).

Medical Workforce Report 2022-2023

The Medical Workforce Report published by NDTP incorporates the mandated annual assessment of NCHDs in the health service as well as an assessment of the consultant medical workforce broken down by demographic and service level variables. The information in this report can be used for multiple purposes by a range of stakeholders, for example, in the development of medical workforce strategies around recruitment and retention, and in supply and demand modelling to better inform the current and future demand for consultants and trainees. The full report is available [here](#).

Some of the main findings are:

- 12% increase in the overall number of consultants employed.
- 16% growth in the number of consultants employed in Model 3 Hospitals.
- 4% growth in the number of doctors in training i.e. those doctors undertaking Basic Specialist Training (BST), and Higher Specialist Training (HST).
- 21% increase in the number of doctors in non-training posts between December 2022 and December 2023.

Retention of Irish Trained Doctors

The Retention of Training Doctors in the Irish Health System Article

While there have been concerns about the retention of Irish trained doctors for many years, there has been a paucity of data to accurately describe the flows of doctors moving in and out of Ireland as they progress through the various stages of training and on to consultant posts. In 2022, NDTP undertook a study to estimate the number of trainee doctors leaving the Irish health system and the numbers returning. The study used data from the DIME (Doctors Integrated Management E-System) database to show the career paths of doctors from internships to consultant posts. Through quantification of DIME data, findings from this study identified that while many doctors leave the Irish health system the vast majority will return. The article was published in February 2023 and can be found [here](#).

Qualitative Study on the Factors Influencing Retention of Qualified Specialist Doctors in Ireland

To further enrich the findings of the Annual Retention Report, NDTP has commenced a qualitative study to understand the personal and professional factors influencing retention of qualified specialists in Ireland. Understanding the nature and likely drivers of doctor migrations at different stages of their careers is critical to implementing policies to improve retention rates.

Medical Workforce Planning Collaboration

Over the course of 2023 and 2024 the Medical Workforce Planning Team continued to support colleagues throughout the HSE and the Department of Health on the development of workforce planning initiatives. The long term goal of these initiatives is to support integrated workforce planning at national and regional levels.

NDTP also worked on a medical workforce planning project partnership arrangement with The Trinity College Centre for Health and Policy Management. The aim of this project is to expedite the development of medical workforce plans for all specialties and to produce a full suite of medical workforce plans by the end of 2024.



CONSULTANT WORKFORCE

Consultant Workforce

As of 31st December 2023, there were 4,506 Consultant Applications Advisory Committee (CAAC) approved Consultant posts. This is an increase of approximately 7.5% when compared to 31st December 2022.

Consultant Applications Advisory Committee (CAAC)

The Consultants Division, as the CAAC secretariat, processes all applications for the committee's consideration. Applications for new, replacement and restructure Consultant posts, as well as change of contract requests are all screened by the Consultants Division. The average turnaround time for the processing of Consultant applications in 2023 was 6 weeks. All CAAC meetings were held online with a total of 10 meetings during 2023.

537 applications were recommended for approval by CAAC in 2023*. As outlined below, 2023 saw an increase of 6.7% in the number of posts recommended for approval when compared to 2022.

Application Type	2022	2023
New	305	311
Replacement	111	135
Restructure	36	37
Change of Contract	51	54
Total	503	537

*since the introduction of the POCC23 in March 2023, direct replacement posts are no longer required to be submitted to the CAAC for review. This came into effect from May 2023 and these application types are processed directly by the Consultants Division and approved by National HR.

The largest number of posts approved were within medicine, with a combined total of 144. 115 of these were new posts, 25 replacement posts and 4 restructure posts.

CAAC Approved Posts Feb - December 2023

Medical Discipline	New Post	Replacement Post	Restructure Post	Total
Anaesthesiology	24	14	6	44
Emergency Medicine	3	1	0	4
Intensive Care Medicine	0	1	0	1
Medicine	115	25	4	144
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	13	13	3	29
Paediatrics	15	7	7	29
Pathology	24	9	7	40
Psychiatry	16	29	2	47
Public Health Medicine	45	7	3	55
Radiology	21	18	3	42
Surgery	35	10	2	47
Dentistry	0	1	0	1
Total	311	135	37	483

**Note: the above does not include change of contracts.

Consultant Applications Portal (CAP)

All applications for new, replacement and restructures for consultant posts are submitted online via the Consultant Application Portal (CAP). The portal facilitates users to complete, verify, submit, and track consultant application forms from the initiation stage to approval online. The introduction of this module has helped to minimize errors and improve the traceability of forms as well as providing a centralised paperless system for all users to access.

2023 saw further completed work around plans to enhance the existing CAP Module within DIME and also the implementation of changes as a result of the introduction of the POCC23.

Type C Committee

The Consultants Division are also secretariat to the Type C Committee and processes all applications for their consideration. Type C meetings also continued to be held online with a total of 2 meetings during 2023.

Public Only Consultants Contract 2023 (POCC23)

The new Public Only Consultants Contract 2023 (POCC23) came into effect on the 8th March 2023.

The introduction of POCC23, has seen the membership of the CAAC extended to include consultant specialities which were previously not represented on the CAAC (e.g. Public Health Medicine, Orthodontics, and Dentistry). A further change as a result of the introduction of the new contract is that applications in respect of direct replacement consultant appointments are now no longer required to be presented to CAAC.

The DIME system is the sole platform chosen for reporting on the uptake of the POCC23. DIME Data Services, within NDTP monitor the uptake of POCC23 on a daily basis, and record the total number of new entrants or existing consultants that have opted to take up/change to POCC23.

Regular reporting is issued from Data Services to National HR, the Acute Hospitals Division and other stakeholders providing a detailed breakdown on its uptake.



INNOVATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – THE SPARK PROGRAMME

The Spark Innovation Programme's mission is to support frontline HSE staff to innovate to solve problems that they face in their clinical settings. The Spark team includes professional fellows from NCHDs, nursing, midwifery and HSCPs, administrative staff, and designers.

The Aims of the Spark Innovation Programme:

- Empower and engage frontline staff in Innovation.
- Provide design and innovation expertise within healthcare.
- Promote early engagement with emerging technology.
- Create a network of innovators to ideate and implement innovative solutions.



The Seven Pillars of the Spark Innovation Programme

1. ENGAGEMENT

Providing engagement opportunities for our innovation collective across the health service.

2. INITIATIVES

Creating opportunities to develop skills, secure micro funding, access mentorship and embed innovation.

3. DESIGN

Implementing user informed change and innovation.

4. NETWORK

Gathering and connecting our internal and external partners.

5. RESEARCH

Contributing to the body of research in the frontline innovation space both nationally and internationally.

6. PIONEERING

Leading the way with new products and services and ways of working through pilots and validation studies.

7. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Providing our staff with the opportunity to develop skills for agency and impact.

The programme is funded and supported by the National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) in conjunction with the Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director (ONMSD), and the Office of Health and Social Care Professionals (HSCP).

Spark Initiatives 2023

Spark Seed

An initiative for frontline healthcare staff with innovative solutions to problems within the health service Spark Seed supports applicants to refine their ideas and implement meaningful solutions by providing mentorship and design thinking workshops. Shortlisted candidates are given the opportunity to pitch for Seed Funding for up to €3000.

In 2023, 122 applications were received for Spark Seed of which 37 were NCHDs (30.3%). Twenty received funding, of which 8 were NCHD projects (40%).

Spark Ignite

Spark Ignite enables staff to develop their commercial ideas through validation of clinical need and market analysis for their proposed solution. Successful applicants benefit from a bespoke healthcare-focused entrepreneurial innovation series.

Spark Fusion

Spark Fusion is an initiative designed to promote healthcare innovation and collaboration across Irish public sector organisations. This initiative offers funding from €5,000 up to a maximum of €50,000 to innovative cross-sectoral projects with a focus on health. Project teams, which must be composed of staff from the Health Service Executive and at least one other public sector organisation, may apply for funding for novel initiatives that have the potential to bring forward the vision of the Healthy Ireland Framework 2013-25. Eight out of 38 applications were from NCHDs/Consultants.

Design on the Frontline

DOTFL challenges design students across the country to develop smart solutions to unmet needs and unresolved challenges in healthcare. The initiative promotes interdisciplinary collaboration between healthcare providers and various design disciplines. Fledgling designers witness first-hand the challenges at the frontline; healthcare staff become active participants in ideating and testing solutions.

Design Workshops

To bridge a gap in health professionals' education which doesn't routinely incorporate training in design, innovation, and creative problem solving, the Spark Programme offers two-part innovation/design thinking workshops which are open to all healthcare staff and runs 4 times a year. The sessions were led by expert designers Martin Ryan and Trevor Vaughn.

Spark Summit

Spark Summit hosted 230 delegates largely comprised of doctors including NCHDs, GPs and consultants, nurses, and HSCPs. A fantastic panel of national and international innovative speakers inspired the audience to bring innovative practices back to their respective sites.



Spark Connect

Throughout Public Sector Transformation Week, Spark showcased some of the leading health innovators in the HSE and invited teams from every county to host innovation events in inpatient, outpatient, and community settings. Spark facilitated this by providing the first ever Spark Connect Toolkits to HSE frontline staff so that they could come together to rapidly identify and solve a healthcare challenge in their area.

Spark also welcomed teams from across the country to join its Online Session: Interviews with Innovators where Spark explored innovative projects shaping healthcare across the country; hearing the inspiring innovation journeys from Health Service Executive frontline staff members.

In 2023:

- 97 participants
- 3 bursaries awarded

NCAD Spark Bursaries

2023 was the first year that Spark introduced the Service Design Diploma Bursaries for HSE frontline staff in the National College of Art and Design.

3 bursaries were awarded to innovative frontline HSE staff including Dr Caoimhe Glancy, Psychiatry Registrar.

The bursaries intend to foster a design culture within HSE staff and empower them to influence and design services in an innovative way

In 2023:

- 32 applicants
- 3 bursaries awarded







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