



11th June 2021

**Re: Irish Dental Association Submission to the Independent Body
Examining Additional Working Hours (HRA) in the Public Service**

| |
|---|
| 1. Please a summary of how the additional working hours have had an impact in your sector/on your members? |
| <p>The additional working hours have had a huge impact on our members in the public dental services. In many cases our members have had their hours increased by up to four hours per week (or 12%) since 2013.</p> <p>This has had a major impact on members' lives and work life balance. In the main, the majority of dentists in the public service are female with caring responsibilities and the additional hours have imposed an additional burden and stress upon them.</p> |
| 2. Please provide details of the additional working hours and any increase in overtime divisors. |
| <p>As a result of the increase in working hours under the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA), a large number of our members were required to work additional hours that we believe were in excess of the requirements of the HRA. For example, some of our members who worked 33 hours per week, by local arrangement, prior to 1st July 2013 were required to move to 37 hours. This meant a total increase of four hours per week or a 12% increase in working hours for a proportion of our members.</p> <p>Even though the same salary was payable, it became clear that different lengths of working week existed across the country amongst our dental surgeon members working in the HSE, ranging from 32.5 to 35 hours, before the additional working hours were introduced under the Haddington Road Agreement.</p> <p>IDA's clear and consistent position since 2013 has been that in increasing their working week by 2 hours and 15 minutes, our members fully discharged their obligations under the HRA and should not have been requested to work further hours in excess of this. We do not believe that such a large increase in weekly working hours was intended for any grade under the HRA.</p> |

Furthermore, a letter dated 10th June 2015 from Mr John Delamere, Head of Corporate Employee Relations in the HSE, stated that Appendix 9 of the HRA applies to grades represented by the IDU. Appendix 9 provided that, on a personal to holder basis, increases in working hours would be limited to two hours and fifteen hours per week.

3. Please provide details of any issues regarding associated costs with reference to possible replacement mechanisms, e.g. rostering changes, productivity measures, recruitment, overtime/premia payments, agency staffing.

There has been a huge cost to the increased hours in terms of making it less attractive for dentists to remain in the public service. This has contributed to problems retaining and recruiting dentists in the public dental service at a time when the service is understaffed. Failure to remedy the increased hours will continue to exacerbate the recruitment and retention problems.

4. Please provide details of any issues regarding the operational, service delivery and administrative implications associated with any reduction in hourly work requirements, including the proportion of hours that support direct service delivery compared with those that provide indirect services.

Since 2013 IDA has sought to engage with the HSE to reach agreement as to how the additional time should be discharged. No agreement was formally reached.

We believe that in the main the hours have been discharged in clinical duties because the service is currently massively understaffed. Over the past decade there has been a 20% reduction in dental staffing and a 20% increase in eligible patients.

5. Any other comments you may wish to make in relation to additional working hours having regard to the Body's Terms of Reference

The Irish Dental Association believes a number of key principles should apply:

- All staff should work the same hours where they are undertaking the same duties on the same salary regardless of their location.
- That the maximum working week for our members in the public dental service should be 35 hours.
- In the event that a harmonisation of all dental staff to a 35 hour week is introduced then any member who previously worked less than 35 hours should be entitled to a once off payment to compensate them for what would be a defacto increase in working hours that others will not have provided for the duration of the period since 2013.
- In addition, should a working week of 35 hours be reinstated, no member should have to forfeit salary in order to revert to 35 hours.
- Should a working week of 35 hours be reinstated, any member who previously reverted to their pre-HRA working hours on the basis of a pro-rata pay adjustment should be compensated by having their pay restored or by having their working hours reduced.

- Agreement is still required on dedicated time within the agreed weekly hours commitment to administrative and CPD duties and we are seeking resolution of this long-standing claim as a matter of urgency.