

## HSC Trust Budget Cuts Extraordinary Meetings Briefing Paper

### Workload Pressures

Research published by NIASW in September 2016 highlights 50% of social workers have at least one staff vacancy in their team. As a result of workload pressures on staff, nine out of ten social workers routinely work additional unpaid hours. These total 742,000 hours – a saving to the Health and Social Care sector of £11.4 million annually.

**To ensure staff continue to deliver high quality services to the most vulnerable in society it is fundamentally important that budget cuts do not result in additional staff vacancies.**

### Agency Staff

Employing staff on agency contracts does not represent value for money. The Bengoa report *Systems not Structures* highlights that in 2014/15 almost £76.5 million was spent on employing locum and agency staff across the HSC workforce, a 78% increase on the £43 million spent in 2010/11.

Social work spend on HSC agency staff amounted to £2.9 million in 2014/15, this increased to £4.6 million in 2015/16.

**Relying on agency and locum staff is increasingly proving unsustainable. It is essential the HSC Trusts and the Department of Health urgently devise and implement a plan to significantly reduce spend on agency and locum staff across HSC.**

### The need to protect budgets for prevention & early intervention

The Bengoa report recognises the need to increase investment in primary care and prevention to reduce the cost of admission to acute hospital services. When short term savings are required to social service budgets it is often early intervention and prevention work which is cut back. However, making cuts to these programmes of work only serves to increase the scope of social problems, resulting in greater costs in the longer term.

Bengoa also recognises our aging population will require significant additional social care resources to adequately provide for people in need of care and support. For example, by 2020 there will be a 15% increase in the number of care packages required compared to 2016.

**The HSC Trusts must not regard cuts to early intervention and prevention work across programmes of care in social work as legitimate means by which to deliver financial savings.**

### Multidisciplinary Primary Care

The former Health Minister's 10-year vision for HSC proposed the introduction of a multidisciplinary primary care team (MDT) model embedded around General Practice. These teams will include GPs, Pharmacists, District Nurses, Health Visitors, Allied Health Professionals and Social Workers. NIASW is supportive of the proposal, recognising social work has a key role to play in primary care provision.

**NIASW believes the MDT model will require the creation of new Consultant Social Worker roles, with the staff in these posts trained to work across all programmes of care. It is essential the new model does not strip resources from existing social work teams and additional investment will be required to train and employ staff in these roles.**