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€5,000 sign-on bonuses, housing and other perks offered to woo health staff

Pay rises of 17pc for junior healthcare workers noted in 2024 salary guide

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Sign-on bonuses of up to €5,000, longer holidays and housing are being offered by some desperate health employers in a bid to coax workers to take up jobs.

Employers are having to offer perks to prospective staff as healthcare facilities such as private hospitals are finding it increasingly difficult to find and retain workers.

Overall, there have been 17pc pay increases for junior healthcare staff in the last 12 months, but more experienced workers' salaries are largely unchanged, according to the Excel Recruitment Healthcare Salary Guide 2024.

A spokeswoman said that "some private hospitals are offering a starting bonus or relocation allowance of up to €5,000 to staff nurses".

The HSE, which imposed an embargo on recruitment last autumn, with a number of exceptions including hospital consultants and graduate nurses, is expected to increase its staff by over 2,000 this year in targeted areas.

However, private employers are struggling to find staff, leaving them leaning more on agency and overseas workers with incentives to tempt them to take on jobs.

"The staffing crisis has also prompted many healthcare providers to become landlords for their employees, with rental accommodation increasingly being offered by employers in an attempt to secure workers," the spokeswoman also said.

This is also a feature for some of the public maternity hospitals in Dublin including the National Maternity Hospital, which has secured a number of houses

to offer short-term accommodation to nurses coming here from abroad.

Shane McLave, managing director at Excel Recruitment, said: "Recent increases in the national minimum wage have had a knock-on effect on

pay rates across the sector, with many junior healthcare staff being paid more than this time last year, while the pay rates of more experienced or senior staff have not moved.

"Organisations are exploring various strategies, including offering competitive benefits such as pension options, sick leave, extra holidays, and sign-on bonuses of up to €5,000.

"The Irish housing crisis has become a significant concern for employers, and many healthcare providers, particularly outside of Dublin, are offering accommodation to attract professionals."

The average hourly rate for a kitchen porter working in a healthcare catering setting is up 17pc on last year, from €11.80 to €13.80.

The average hourly rate of a cleaner working in healthcare is up 12.5pc on last year – from €12 in 2023 to €13.50 today.

Most healthcare assistants have seen an improvement in pay rates of 10pc or more.

For example, the average hourly rate for a daytime healthcare assistant with between one and two years' experience is now €15.90 – 15pc higher than last year's rate of €13.80.

A director of nursing is now earning €88,000, up from €86,000 last year, and there has been a €2,000 increase to €68,000 for an assistant director of nursing.

Average salaries for medical social workers are the same as last year at €45,000, and speech and language therapist wages also remain at €46,000.

"Looking ahead, staffing and recruitment pose significant challenges in the healthcare sector, with factors like mandatory sick pay, pension scheme changes, an additional bank holiday, and a minimum wage increase contributing to rising costs," Mr McLave said.

"Many healthcare providers, especially outside Dublin, offer accommodation"