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The role of Management Development in the Irish Health Services

Doing more with less is one of the great mantras of management. However, during this time of constrained resources, can service quality really be improved while cost savings are made? In the last two years, the Irish Health Service has demonstrated that it is possible and much of the progress can be attributed to better managers and to better management.

Some of the figures speak for themselves. 2012 saw a 98% decrease in the number of adults waiting more than nine months for inpatient and day case surgery. There was a 95% reduction in the number of children waiting more than 20 weeks for inpatient or day case surgery.

The management processes involved are not rocket science. They rely on sound, fundamental principles of management. They include multi-disciplinary teams who develop strategies and are prepared to break the mould. Resources are focused on critical problem areas and well-constructed plans with strong monitoring and feedback system are relentlessly implemented.

Visible leadership and communication with key stakeholders is vital. The launch of the Department of Health Strategy – Future Health – was accompanied by a communications drive by the Minister and his officials throughout the country, during which he met thousands of managers. Both the Minister and his officials have placed management development high on the agenda for action under the change programme.

In fact the policy document states the importance of a strategic leadership, governance and development framework which ensures that services are delivered cost-effectively, are safe and of high quality and are managed in compliance with the highest standards of governance.

The Health Management Institute of Ireland continues to play its role in the development of managers through its regional events, management forums, publications and training activities and resources. Its work has received the endorsement of key stakeholders within the health system and it is developing its resources to expand this role over the coming years.

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