

**Mid-Western Health Board**  
**Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General**

*This report has been prepared pursuant to Section 6(4) of the Comptroller and General (Amendment) Act, 1993.*

**Hospitals' Debtors**

Income generated by the Board under the General Hospital Programme in 1996 in respect of in-patient, maintenance and other charges amounted to £5,840,060. The following is an aged analysis of the debtors in the following locations at 31 December 1996.

Location	Pre 1996 £	1996 £	Total £
Regional General Hospital	1,015,032	1,261,765	2,276,797
General Hospital Nenagh	30,410	99,873	130,283
St. Nesson's Hospital Croom	322,468	254,214	576,682
General Hospital Ennis	130,923	146,625	277,548
Regional Maternity Hospital	102,516	241,513	344,029
Total	1,601,349	2,003,990	3,605,339

A total of £2.17m has been provided in the financial statements to cover non collection of these debts.

I requested information as to

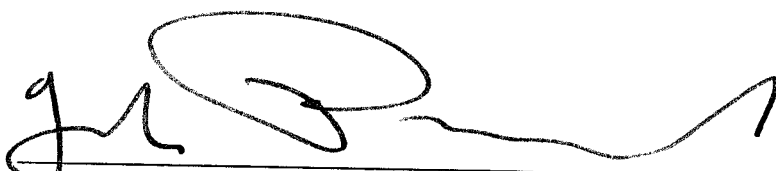
- the adequacy of the Board's debtors collection system
- the necessity to increase the provision for bad debts by 22%.

In response to my inquiries the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) stated that

- The Board's collection procedures have been formalised, documented and improved over the last 2 to 3 years. The Board also utilises two professional debt collection agencies to pursue all debts where internal procedures have failed to achieve a result. An amount of £1.6m had been received in 1996 in respect of debts which had arisen in previous years.

At the end of 1996 the health boards jointly commissioned a report from the Finance Officers into ways in which debt collection procedures could be improved. This report has been finalised and is currently being considered by the CEOs.

- The provision in respect of bad debts increased in 1996 because the Board decided that all debts outstanding for more than 12 months would be provided for and because a further amount of £367,000 of current year debt is unlikely to be collected due to a limit which has been placed on the amount that may be recovered from the VHI.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Purcell', written over a horizontal line.

John Purcell  
Comptroller and Auditor General

27 November 1997