

CC/CC/MC

Email: pgmidwestacute@hse.ie

09th June 2022

Mr Cathal Crowe TD,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

RE: PQ 26922/22, PQ 26520/22, PQ 25415/22

***To ask the Minister for Health the way it is proposed to alleviate pressures on University Hospital Limerick; the role Ennis General Hospital can and will play in this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - Cathal Crowe**

***To ask the Minister for Health the way that he proposes to build additional capacity in Ennis General Hospital and the other model 2 hospitals in the mid-west region, including Nenagh and St. John's, to alleviate pressure on University Hospital Limerick. -Cathal Crowe**

***To ask the Minister for Health if he will consider a greater role for Ennis General Hospital, to meet the health needs of persons in the mid-west given the overcrowding and high trolley numbers at University Hospital Limerick. -Cathal Crowe**

Dear Deputy Crowe,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Significant reform has occurred in the delivery of healthcare in the Mid- West over the last decade. This reform has taken place with the patients best interests placed at the core of all reform programmes. The publication of The Report of the Acute Medicine Programme (2010) classifies all acute hospitals under four generic models that describe in precise detail what services may safely be provided at each site.

Within the UL Hospitals Group we have two Model 2 Hospitals, Ennis and Nenagh Hospitals. Securing the Future of Smaller Hospitals: a Framework for Development, published in February 2013, shaped the future of Ennis and Nenagh Hospital. Under this government policy, these hospitals have an integral role to play in the future growth in healthcare, the provision of ambulatory care, chronic disease management, day surgery, endoscopy etc.

We are committed to investing in our Model 2 Hospital sites to enhance patient care in line with national policy.

We recently opened a new Outpatients Department at Ennis Hospital. The new OPD has 15 clinical rooms, in addition to a phlebotomy bay, four waiting areas, offices and staff changing rooms. The new department allows for the relocation of services such as cardiac rehabilitation, radiology and general X-Ray.

A theatre upgrade was also recently approved for Ennis Hospital as part of the HSE's Capital Programme for 2022. The approved capital budget for this project is €9.95m and is currently at the design stage.

Our Injury Units in Nenagh, Ennis and St John's benefit from the expertise and care of a consultant-led team of doctors, Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioners (RANPs), nurses, and other healthcare professionals who are highly experienced in the treatment of injuries that may not be threatening to life and limb, but which nonetheless require medical attention and treatment. UL Hospitals Group has three Injury Units—in Ennis, Nenagh and St John's Hospital—where tens of thousands of people over the age of 5 years are treated every year for minor injuries such as sprains, breaks and burns. In 2021, of the total of 33,853 patients who attended all three units, 11,219 attended Ennis. This was a 17.6% increase in demand on 2020 usage of the Ennis unit, returning it to pre-pandemic levels of use.

In addition, the Medical Assessment Units at Nenagh, Ennis and St John's provide diagnosis and treatment for patients referred with medical conditions including chest infections, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), pneumonia, urinary tract infections, fainting episodes, clots in the leg, anaemia, or non-acute cardiac problems.

A funding allocation from the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) last year has supported the provision of additional slots in the Medical Assessment Unit at Ennis Hospital. We now have capacity to see 32 patients per day between Monday and Friday and 18 new patients per day at the weekends. Ennis was the first MAU in the country to open seven days per week.

The recruitment of new staff ensured the expansion of the MAU in Ennis. I am pleased to let you know that we recently recruited 1.0 NCHD (non-consultant hospital doctor), 0.5 WTE clerical support, a cardiology technician and three nursing staff. Recruitment campaigns are also ongoing for resources in allied health, general support and radiology.

This investment has facilitated an increase in attendances at MAU from 6,235 in 2020 to 6,796 in 2021.

It is encouraging for our staff that there is so much support from GPs and other healthcare professionals and from members of the public in Clare and the wider region for the continued expansion of activity and services in Ennis Hospital.

As you know, UL Hospitals Management team met the Minister for Health on the 17th February 2022. Clinicians outlined the serious impact increased demand for unscheduled care and limited bed capacity is having on elective care. Concerns were raised regarding the Mid-West not being included in national plans for elective hospital sites, agreed in the Slaintecare plan for Galway and Cork.

An elective hospital in the MidWest would create capacity for patients waiting for sub-acute care. Increased demand for emergency care in recent months has led to the frequent cancellation of elective activity across the sites of UL Hospitals Group.

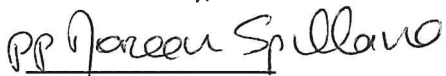
An elective hospital would ensure that scheduled care is no longer disrupted while at the same time creating much-needed capacity at UHL to deliver emergency and time-critical services.

A number of options are available for the provision of extra capacity in the MidWest which could prioritise scheduled care.

Such decisions are beyond the scope of UL Hospitals Group. They require government approval and thereafter sanction from the HSE and we will be looking for support to deliver this vital service through the most appropriate means.

I trust this clarifies the position, please contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group