

By email to: joanna.byrne@oireachtas.ie

22nd January 2025

Ms. Joanna Byrne T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re: Parliamentary Question 1002/25 “To ask the Minister for Health the steps the HSE will take to urgently reduce the number of patients on trolleys at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, noting the high prevalence of respiratory illness in the community; and if he will make a statement on the matter.-Joanna Byrne”

Dear Deputy Byrne,

HSE Dublin and North East has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. Having reviewed the matter, the following outlines the position.

The Emergency Department in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda has remained extremely busy over the last few weeks. There are a high number of patient presentations & admissions to the Emergency Department.

The most critically ill patients are prioritised for treatment and available beds. As a result, some patients may experience delays in being seen. Patients attending with minor injuries will experience longer wait times in the Emergency Department.

In this regard, we are continuing to encourage the public to attend the Emergency Department for emergencies only and would advise people to contact their GP or GP Out of Hours services in the first instance.

The Minor Injuries Unit at Louth County Hospital Dundalk is open from 9am to 8pm daily. By attending the GP, pharmacy or injury unit if you can, it can help alleviate pressure in the Emergency Department.

There are a number of projects completed, ongoing and planned in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda to improve acute hospital capacity which are outlined below;

Service Development/ New Initiatives

- 96 Inpatient Beds; The Department of Health “Acute Inpatient Bed Capacity Expansion Plan (2024-2031)” supports the delivery of 96 new inpatient beds before 2028. Site feasibility study ongoing Q4 2024.
- Ground Floor West GFW (18 beds): Planning permission granted Q3 2024. Phase 1 in construction– subject to funding, operational Q1 2025. Phase 2 tender completed Q4 2024 – subject to funding, construction phase Q1 2025.
- 15 Bed Modular: In construction on site. It is planned to be operational for Q1 2025.
- Early Supported Stroke Discharge Team commenced in January 2023. This team provides home based rehabilitation for stroke survivors as an alternative to inpatient rehabilitation.
- Gynaecology Ambulatory Unit opened in Q3 2022. This has improved access for patients, shortened the care pathway and reduced the overall cost of treatment. The Unit has helped

reduce the gynaecology outpatient waiting list.

- Frailty at the front door service commenced in Q4 2021. This service uses a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach to help frail patients to avoid a hospital stay by intervening at the earliest point in the patient's journey, that is, at the front door in the Emergency Department.

In addition to the above, please see below HSE statement (17.01.2025)

'Despite unprecedented growth in demand, we have seen significant improvements in our urgent and emergency care. With the implementation of the Health Regions, hospitals together with community teams work closely to enable patients move as safely and as efficiently as possible through the acute hospital system. There are a suite of measures that support ED and hospital avoidance, patient experience in the emergency department, patient flow at ward level and safe and timely discharge home or to stepdown facilities and other care supports.

There has been a massive, collective effort right across our services throughout this winter period, with teams working tirelessly to maximise patient flow, whilst ensuring our patients receive the best care possible.

As the number of people living in the community with chronic life-limiting illness increases there are greater numbers presenting to the ED, as the service that is always available and seen as the access point to unscheduled care. Emergency department attendance rates in Ireland have increased significantly in recent years. In 2024 there were 1,567,309 ED attendances which was an increase of 23.8% on ED attendances in 2021. This is based on data to 29 December 2024 compared with same period in 2021.

Below also illustrates the increased demands our ED have experienced: Comparative data 20 Dec 2023- 2 Jan 2024 Vs 20 December 2024 - 2 Jan 2025:

Total attendances 20/12/24 – 02/01/25: 60,609, same period last year 51,394 an **18% increase**
Total admissions 20/12/24 -02/01/2025: 15,384, same period last year 13,814, an **11% increase**
Total discharges since 20/12/24, 13,792 same period last year 12,021, a **15% increase**

The HSE is acutely aware that even one person on a trolley is too many and reducing trolley figures continues to be a particular focus. However, comparisons of hospitals on the basis of trolley figures alone is not an accurate reflection of performance. It fails to consider a multitude of factors that impact EDs on a daily basis, such as the different profiles of patients in terms of age, frailty, complexity of healthcare needs and severity of illness.

Emergency department wait times are also affected by what's happening outside of the hospital ED, in both the hospital and the community. This includes, the availability of inpatient beds within acute hospitals for admissions, the availability of community beds and or home care support for those patients in hospitals who are medically for transfer or discharge to the community. These are all the factors that are closely looked at as we improve patient flow through our hospitals, as part of our year round planning.'

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Stephanie Dunne
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