

CC/LOR/MD

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11th June 2019

Ms Louise O'Reilly TD
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

PQ 21887/19

To ask the Minister for Health the reason the centre of excellence promised for the Ennis region after the downgrading of Ennis and Nenagh hospitals has not been delivered; when it will be delivered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Louise O'Reilly

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

The Health Service Executive 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.

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. St. John's Hospital is classified as a Model 2S Hospital, i.e. can carry out intermediate surgery, which requires in-patient stay and accommodation.

Securing the Future of Smaller Hospitals: a Framework for Development, published in February 2013, shaped the future of Ennis, Nenagh and St. John's 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, five-day surgery and endoscopy.

I am aware of the strength of feeling that still exists in respect of the closure of the 24-7 Emergency Departments in the model 2 hospitals as part of the reconfiguration process that commenced in the MidWest in 2009.

Among the key objectives of the reconfiguration programme, as set out in the (Teamwork/Horwath) consultants report was the centralisation of acute and emergency medical and surgical services, including trauma, in UHL. The programme also provided for the centralisation and expansion of critical care capacity for the region in Limerick; an improved ambulance service for the region and, crucially, the development of appropriate services in the smaller hospitals (urgent care centres/injury units, medical assessment units, day surgery, radiology etc).

The aim of the reforms was to ensure that patient safety was improved across the region by delivering care in the right place and by the right teams. This required an upgrading of diagnostic, outpatient, endoscopy and day services in our model 2 hospitals and all of this has been achieved in Ennis.

Significant capital investment in Ennis Hospital in recent years has included new build and refurbishment projects set out in tabular form below:

Summary for Ennis Hospital

Department	Open	Investment
Radiology Dept	2009	€1m
Canteen	2009	€0.5m
Endoscopy & Day Ward	2011	€2.5m
50 Single en-suite rooms	2012	€8.9m
Pharmacy & Physio Dept	2014	€0.6m
Family Room	2014	€75K
Upgrading Heating System	2015	€0.5m
Local Injury Unit	2018	€850k

In addition, we completed the refurbishment of one of the vacated units in Ennis and opened a new Medical Assessment Unit there in 2013. Additional medical and nursing resources were put in place and today the MAU in Ennis is led by a consultant physician working with a team providing an excellent service to GPs and their patients in Clare.

Ennis is one of the busiest MAUs in the country and the service has in recent years expanded from a 5-day service to 7 days a week.

There was a 5% annual increase in referrals to the Medical Assessment Unit in Ennis Hospital in 2018 (from 4,324 to 4,536) as well as a 5% increase in attendances in the Injury Unit (from 10,631 to 11,170) over the same period. It is encouraging that members of the public and GPs continue to use these services in increasing numbers. To complement these services, significant investment went into additional diagnostic services in Ennis (CT/ultrasound/x-ray) to enable full assessment of patients.

Scheduled care services in Ennis also continue to expand with the addition of new outpatient clinics (e.g. dermatology, renal, pulmonary fibrosis, rheumatology, perinatal mental health). In recent years, patients at Ennis have had better access to more specialist clinics – both consultant led and nurse-led – at OPD than ever before. The current OPD in Ennis Hospital is located in an outdated, listed building and it is our intention to continue to provide additional OPD services to the people of Clare in an offsite location in Ennis in the near future.

Patients in Ennis have also seen improvements in services available locally to cardiology patients (see Appendix 1).

Day surgery and endoscopy services in Ennis have also increased significantly in recent years in line with national policy. UL Hospitals Group continues to seek opportunities to expand day surgery in Ennis Hospital.

It is unfortunate that much of the public discourse around model 2 hospitals focuses on services that they have been removed in accordance with national policy. Rarely is reference made to the significant additional services being provided by committed staff in hospitals like Ennis. Every day, Ennis is making a real difference in providing ambulatory care, scheduled care, day surgery, rehabilitation and much more to patients from the Mid-West and beyond.

The excellence of Ennis Hospital and its staff was recognised in the National Patient Experience Survey 2018 when 98% of the patients who participated rated their overall experience as good or very good. This was the highest satisfaction rating achieved by any hospital in the country.

I trust this clarifies the position. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.



Working together, caring for you

Yours sincerely,



Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
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Appendix 1

Ennis Hospital Bed Complement:

- 50 single en-suite, in-patient beds
- 16 day beds
- Seven endoscopy beds
- Eight Medical Assessment Unit (MAU) trolleys
- Six Injury Unit (IU)trolleys

Patient services delivered at Ennis Hospital include:

- Injury Unit open 7 days per week
- Medical Assessment Unit open 7 days per week
- A broad range of cardiology services are provided including Out-patient clinics and diagnostic investigations and a nurse led Heart Failure Clinic
- Respiratory Services are well established in Ennis hospital supporting the management of chronic diseases such as COPD.
- A consultant led Renal Out-patient Clinic with the support of a clinical nurse specialist and onsite medical & diagnostic support is held in Ennis
- Diabetic Services are well established with a consultant-led service and monthly shared OPD clinics with the lead Consultant Endocrinologist for the group.
- An Outpatient Antimicrobial Therapy Service (OPAT) has been established
- Rheumatology Services are fully operational via OPD every Monday.
- Elective day surgery is performed in a two theatres suite supported by Pre-operative Assessment Service, the Surgical Day Unit and the Decontamination service.
- Pre-operative assessment is conducted in advance of the patient's admission for surgery
- The Surgical Day Unit has 16 day beds in support of the theatre activity and day case
- Day Surgery operative services provided at Ennis Hospital include colo-rectal surgery, breast day case surgery, gynaecology surgery, dental surgery for children and adults, urology diagnostic assessments (cystoscopy) and surgery, general surgery and vascular surgery. Dermatology also provides a day surgery for procedures requiring both local and general anaesthetic.
- The Endoscopy Services is comprised of two procedure rooms and seven day beds. The unit and the service is one of the few centres in Ireland to have achieved Joint Advisory Group Accreditation (JAG) and it is currently the only approved centre for colorectal cancer screening in the west of Ireland.
- As part of the National Cancer Screening services, Ennis hospital through the services of a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) manages the bowel screening programme for the region.
- The Out Patients Department offer appointments for ENT, gynaecology, general surgery, colo-rectal, orthopaedics, vascular, urology, genito –urinary.

- Laboratory service provides testing to in-patient, outpatient and day case presentations at Ennis Hospital including Clinical Biochemistry and Haematology testing. The hospital also provides a laboratory service to the General Practitioner community and the Community Hospitals in the Clare catchment area.
- The Radiology Department provides an imaging and reporting service to inpatients, outpatients and day case presentations at Ennis Hospital. It also provides a service to the General Practitioner community in County Clare. Radiology services provided are plain films (chest x-ray, limb x-rays etc), Ultrasound (US) and Computerised Tomography (CT).
- The new Physiotherapy Department was opened in 2015 and provides out-patient and in-patient programmes. The department sees orthopaedic, neurology and paediatric patients as outpatients. It also runs programmes on Bone health, Pulmonary Rehab and women's health.
- The Pharmacy provides a clinical pharmacology service to all in-patients.
- Outreach Ante Natal incorporating a midwives clinic
- Ante Natal Classes , topics covered include pregnancy, care of the newborn, breastfeeding, labour and maternal recovery
- Infant Feeding Clinics
- Paediatric Clinics
- Gynaecology Clinics