



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

St Canices Hospital  
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Kilkenny

Telephone 353 56 7784494

19<sup>th</sup> November 2019

Ms. Mary Butler T.D.  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin

**PQ 45824/19 To ask the Minister for Health his plans to address the overcrowding issue being experienced in the adult psychiatric unit at University Hospital Waterford and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

**PQ 45825/19 To ask the Minister for Health the number of adult cases admitted to the psychiatric unit at the University Hospital Waterford in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the number of adult discharges that occurred in the same period at the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter**

**PQ 45826/19 To ask the Minister for Health the number of adult cases transferred from the psychiatric unit at University Hospital Waterford to another similar facility due to overcrowding issues at University Hospital Waterford in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, and if he will make a statement on the matter**

**PQ 45827/19 To ask the Minister for Health his plans to increase the staffing numbers at the psychiatric unit at University Hospital Waterford and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

**PQ 45828/19 To ask the Minister for Health the position regarding a new psychiatric unit at University Hospital Waterford, the progress made and if he will make a statement on the matter**

**PQ 45829/19 To ask the Minister for Health his plans to provide appropriate step-down services for psychiatric patients both adults and children at University Hospital Waterford and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Butler,

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

*I have reviewed that matter and the following is the composite position:*

The 44 bed Department of Psychiatry (DOP) University Hospital Waterford (UHW) is the designated approved centre for acute inpatient services for the counties of Waterford and Wexford.

Referrals to the Department of Psychiatry are through a Consultant Psychiatrist who will make the clinical decision to admit based on the level of acute presentation/need. It is acknowledged that there can at times issues of overcapacity in the Department of Psychiatry.

In instances of overcapacity additional measures including increased staffing and alternative external placement are applied. In cases where the number of patients in urgent need of a bed exceeds 44, the priority is to ensure that any additional patients are accommodated in a safe environment while awaiting a bed. In some cases patients will need to wait overnight for a bed in the unit and in such cases every effort will be made to make them as comfortable as possible. In these cases patients may be offered chairs and blankets. Further to Mental Health Commission rules and regulations, the unit is not permitted to put up an additional bed beyond the 44 beds for which the DOP, UHW is currently licenced.

Year	No. Admissions	Total Discharges
2016	682	676
2017	650	596
2018	633	599
2019	525	488

New admissions presenting to the unit at times of overcapacity following consultation may be re-directed to another unit within the locality. Data in relation to these re-directed cases is not maintained locally at the Department of Psychiatry UHW. This data is maintained by the receiving units.

In relation to staffing where it has not been possible to fill vacant posts rosters are filled by sourcing agency staff. When there is over occupancy in the unit additional staff are brought in. Safe levels of nursing are always adhered to. Recruitment challenges are common across all grades of psychiatric nursing and in medicine and this is a national problem.

A business case is in the process of development for submission to HSE Estates with regard to the replacement of the Dept of Psychiatry, University Hospital, Waterford. When completed the business case will be presented by HSE Estates for consideration for inclusion on the HSE National Capital Plan. Decisions in relation to all capital business plans are subject to available resources within the national capital fund.

Yours sincerely,



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**David Heffernan**  
**Head of Mental Health Services**  
**South East Community Healthcare**