



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

25-02-2021

Deputy Carol Nolan  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

Rannan na nOspideil Ghearmhíochaine  
Aonad 4A – Áras Dargan  
An Ceantar Theas  
An Bothar Mileata  
Cill Mhaighneann  
BÁC 8

Acute Operations  
Health Service Executive  
Unit 4A - The Dargan Building  
Heuston South Quarter  
Military Road  
Kilmainham  
Dublin 8.

**PQ 7782/21** - *To ask the Minister for Health the number of ICU beds that existed in public hospitals in February 2020; the number that currently exist; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy Nolan,

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.

The starting baseline Critical Care beds prior to COVID 19 was 255.

The HSE has received funding for an additional 66 beds through the Estimates 2021 broken down as follows:

- **40 beds funded initially with temporary COVID-19 funding.**
  - These are now funded permanently within Estimates funding
  - 31 of these were open at the time of the Winter Plan announcement in October 2020 which brought our baseline to 286.
  - The balance of 9 beds scheduled to open in Quarter 1.
  
- **A further 26 beds are provided through the Estimates 2021.**
  - 6 profiled to open in Quarter 1, 2021.
  - 20 profiled to open in Quarter 4, 2021. These require capital developments.
  
- **The expected impact of these combined initiatives on the baseline capacity in 2021 is as follows:**
  - Quarter 1 2021 – baseline to increase by 15 to 301
  - Quarter 4 2021 - baseline to increase by 20 to 321

➤ **Current Status (15 beds due to open in Qtr 1)**

- 8 beds opened in December/January bringing the baseline to 294
- 4 beds due to open in February 2021
- 1 bed due to open in March 2021
- 2 beds revised schedule to open during quarters 3 / 4 due to challenges in staffing

➤ **Summary position**

- The starting baseline was 255.
- The current baseline is 294 beds with 8 of the 15 additional beds opened in January.
- 5 of the remaining 7 beds will open in quarter 1 which will bring the baseline to 299. There is a delay in opening 2 beds scheduled for quarter 1 due to staffing challenges
- The remaining 2 beds plus 20 further beds will open during 2021 using Estimates funding
- By the end of 2021, the baseline will be 321. The number of beds available may fluctuate on a daily basis subject to staffing availability particularly during the Pandemic.
- In terms of surge capacity, as of 23rd February, we have 325 critical care beds open and staffed to meet surge demands. **See below.**

➤ **Critical Care Surge**

- In order to cope with the first Pandemic surge in terms of requirements for Critical Care, considerable quantities of equipment, including ventilators, were procured, surge plans to maximise patient care opportunities drawn up and staff training in critical care was delivered.
- 1600 staff received in-hospital training to support critical care and spaces were identified and equipped to ventilate up to 800 patients. It must be made very clear that this surge resource was an emergency measure and that the normal standards of care could not be delivered to this number of patients. This was a response to an unknown challenge designed to try and give patients, who could not breathe adequately on their own, an opportunity to survive.

- Based on the learning from the 1st surge, the Critical Care Programme have developed a capacity risk stratification table. With current resources it is anticipated that optimal outcome opportunity is provided when care is delivered within the baseline capacity which is now 294. Surge plans are in place if demand exceeds this but with the knowledge that this affects the standards of care for all critical care patients and that this has an outcome impact, particularly beyond 350 beds. As such it is their advice that where possible demand should be controlled so as not to exceed capacity.

**The most recent COVID-19 report of 23rd of February 2021, reports the following:**

➤ **Adult Critical Care**

- 325 Adult Critical Care beds are open and staffed
- 294 Critical Care beds are occupied
- 148 COVID-19 patients

➤ **Paediatric Critical Care**

- 31 Paediatric Critical Care beds are open and staffed
- 23 Critical Care beds are occupied
- 0 COVID-19 patients

Yours sincerely,



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**Trina Doran**  
**Acute Operations**