

CC/PT/MC

Email: pgmidwestacute@hse.ie

28th June 2021

Mr Peadar Tóibín TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re: PQ 23637/21

*** To ask the Minister for Health the number of cancelled hospital appointments in University Hospital Limerick in 2020 and to date in 2021. -Peadar Tóibín**

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

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.

I have been in contact with the relevant staff and I am setting out, in tabular form overleaf, the number of outpatient appointments and inpatient and day case procedures cancelled at UHL for the period in question.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and recent cyber-attack on HSE IT systems have resulted in significant disruption to health services across the country, including at UL Hospitals Group. Scheduled care across our hospitals has been particularly impacted because of these events. The reduction in scheduled care was in line with national policy on pandemic response. However, emergency and time-critical services have continued to operate throughout the pandemic and in the weeks following the debilitating cyber attack.

In addition, there has been considerable growth of and investment in virtual outpatient consultations for many specialties across UL Hospitals Group.

I can advise in relation to outpatients that during 2020, 103,876 in-person appointments and 39,028 virtual appointments took place at University Hospital Limerick. In addition, up-to the 1st May 2021, 34,314 in-person appointments and 17,611 virtual appointments have taken place. This compares to 156,150 in-person appointments and 3,957 virtual appointments in 2019. This in effect meant that outpatient appointments at UHL (virtual and face-to-face combined) during 2020 were at 89% of the pre-pandemic levels of 2019, demonstrating how services adapted.

While the pandemic was the single biggest reason for appointments being cancelled by the hospital, appointments can also be cancelled for other reasons, including by the patients themselves or their parents/guardians. During 2020 for example, almost 25,000 outpatient appointments had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 precautions. During that year, over 6,400 appointments were cancelled because the patient was unavailable (including through illness), because the appointment was rebooked or because the appointment was no longer required.



The data requested by you is outlined in further detail in the tables below:

The below table outlines the total number of cancelled inpatient admissions in 2020 and up-to the 01st May 2021 at University Hospital Limerick.

Year	Daycase	Inpatient	Not Specified	Total
2020	2,289	1,300	16	3,605
2021	643	418	4	1,065
Total	2,932	1,718	20	4,670

In addition, the total number of cancelled outpatient appointments for 2020 and up-to the 1st May 2021 at University Hospital Limerick is outlined in the table below.

Year	
2020	50,288
2021	14,120
Total	64,408

We are gradually resuming our scheduled care services across our sites clinics and we are acutely conscious of the anxiety and distress that the unfortunate but necessary suspension of so much scheduled work had on patients, especially those who had already been waiting a long time for their outpatient appointment or procedure. We are carefully scaling up these services in line with the national public health guidance and in a manner which optimises patient care while minimising risks to patients, staff and the wider healthcare system.

Enhanced access to scheduled care is highlighted by the Department of Health as one of five priorities for inclusion in the HSE's 2021 Service Plan. The need to address current access and waiting list challenges has also been identified as a key strategic priority within the HSE's corporate plan for the next three years. Improving Scheduled Care access is also one of the key priorities in Sláintecare. In this regard, the HSE has established a Scheduled Care Transformation Programme to ensure a sustained, system-wide transformation process. The Programme aims to tackle the challenge of scheduled care waiting times, improve access to scheduled care services, and ensure the safe delivery of care in the context of the on-going Pandemic.

In 2021, the HSE and the NTPF have received unprecedented investment which provides a real opportunity to improve access for the people we service. The HSE is working with the Department of Health and the National Treatment Purchase Fund to develop a joint multi annual approach to sustainably tackling waiting lists.



Working together, caring for you

Ospidéal na hOllscoile, Luimneach,
Bóthar Naomh Neasáin, Tuar an Dail, Luimneach V94 F858
Tel: 061 301111 Facs: 061 301165

University Hospital Limerick,
St. Nesson's Road, Dooradoyle, Limerick V94 F858
Tel: 061 301111 Fax: 061 301165

At UL Hospitals Group we look forward to the publication of these Access to Care plans as we look to reduce waiting lists.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Colette Cowan'.

Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group



University Hospital Limerick is a member of **UL Hospitals Group** which also comprises: Nenagh Hospital, Ennis Hospital, Croom Orthopaedic Hospital, University Maternity Hospital Limerick and St. John's Hospital (voluntary).