



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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
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30th June, 2021

Deputy Darren O'Rourke
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2.

PQ 23713/21* To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of funding the endoscopy action plan to build a sustainable endoscopy system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Darren O'Rourke

Dear Deputy O'Rourke,

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.

Response:

The first national Action Plan for Endoscopy was published in 2017. The Action Plan was updated in December 2020 to take account of the impact of the first two waves of COVID during 2020.

The purpose of the GI Endoscopy Action Plan is to describe a strategic approach for endoscopy services.

The 2021 plan describes the importance of expanding projects/ initiatives which are already underway from 2017 and it identifies new areas for targeted investment from 2021 onwards.

One aim of the action plan is to recommend and prioritise initiatives which will improve access to endoscopy for patients all while taking account of the very real challenges faced as a result of COVID-19. The action plan sets out a range of existing and new initiatives areas across the broad domains of

- workforce
- capacity
- quality improvement, training and governance
- Improved performance.

€5m (approx.) has been committed to specific endoscopy initiatives through the National Service Plan for 2021. This new investment in 2021 is enabling three key projects which are described in more detail in the Action Plan.

- 1) The expansion of nurse-led endoscopy triage in all endoscopy units nationwide.
- 2) The use of alternative/less invasive clinical procedures for some GI endoscopy patients, in particular the funding will allow for using faecal immunochemical test (which is a stool test) for patients who are on waiting lists as well as using this test for newly referred patients.
- 3) The expansion of capsule endoscopy services.

As part of this new investment, 39 new nursing jobs nationwide have been created.

As well as €10m (approx.) funding for endoscopy equipment (e.g. scopes for doing procedures) and decontamination equipment further investment in capital (buildings) is required to create more capacity for endoscopy services. Work has commenced on scoping the full cost of capital works described in the action plan, but more technical input is required to finalise these costs.

To support the further implementation of the GI Endoscopy Action Plan the NTPF has committed to funding clinical validation in 2021 in up to 13 hospitals to date which is improving the use of capacity in endoscopy units. This equates to approx. €871,000 in temporary funding. This is in addition to regular outsourcing support from the NTPF.

Appendix 1 of the action plan describes the staffing requirement for endoscopy services nationwide as of November 2020. Since then, funding for six Consultant Gastroenterologists was secured in November 2020. The funding required for new posts in endoscopy services nationwide now stands at €5.5m.

For information: €500,000 was allocated in the 2018 National Service Plan. Full year commitments of €3.4M were supported by Acute Operations in 2019. This equates to 47 WTE posts in 14 hospitals. In November 2020.

I trust that this answers your question.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Kidd
Assistant National Director
Acute Operations