



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

28th September 2021

Deputy Mattie McGrath
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 42074/21 *To ask the Minister for Health the details of all of the increased bed and ICU capacity delivered since March 2020; the number of additional healthcare staff employed by the HSE since 2020; the efforts made to reduce pressure on bed capacity facing winter 2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy McGrath,

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.

In recognition of the significant and sustained effect of the Pandemic on both unscheduled and planned work, the HSE Service Plan 2021 set out specific actions and funding to support improved access. The HSE's critical care bed target was to deliver an additional 66 critical care beds by 31 December 2021 bringing the total to 321 beds. There are currently 42 of these 66 beds open, which is a total of 297 critical care beds now open.

The HSE received funding approval in 2021 to open 1,146 acute beds. A number of these beds were already open in 2020 and funded under the HSE's Winter Plan or on a once off basis by the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). The 2021 budget provided funding on a recurring basis for the beds that were previously funded by the NTPF.

There is a total number of 762 acute beds open to date. A further 165 acute beds are expected to open before year end which will result in additional acute bed capacity of 927 beds in 2021. The opening of the remaining acute beds is delayed for the following reasons;

- Recruitment of staff
- Capital delays including planning permission

There are a number of international recruitment campaigns underway to recruit staff across a number of categories including nursing and medical staff. The recruitment

clearance and staff orientation processes is time consuming and adds to delays from initial job offer to appointment. From March 2020 to August 2021 the number of WTEs in the Health Service Executive has increased by 10,064.

The additional bed capacity is welcome having regard to the pressures experienced by hospitals resulting from increased ED attendances and admissions, as well as infection, prevention and control requirements during the covid-19 pandemic.

In regard to the efforts being made to reduce pressure on bed capacity facing winter 2021, the Health Service Executive is developing a new winter plan which seeks to build on the success of the Plan for last winter including consolidation of COVID /non COVID pathways, strengthened measures for egress from hospitals including home supports, long term care and enhanced primary care measures to ensure that patients use other options for accessing urgent care including Pharmacist, GP, GP Out of Hours Services and Minor Injury Units. In an emergency situation, Emergency Departments (EDs) continue to deal with all medical emergencies.

I trust that this answers your question.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Fitzgerald', written in a cursive style.

Angela Fitzgerald
Deputy National Director
Acute Operations

Table 1 No. of additional beds commissioned to 31 March 2021

	December 2020 baseline	Mar-21
Bed Category	No. of beds	No. of beds
Total Inpatient beds	10,997	11,323
Minus: Critical Care beds	255	297
Baseline - Inpatient acute beds	10,742	11,026
Plus: Average no. of closed beds in March 21		324
Total no. of beds	10,742	11,350
No. of additional beds commissioned up to 31 March 2021		
Total no. of beds commissioned to the end of March 21	716	
Less: Sub acute beds under the governance of acute hospitals	118	
Additional acute inpatient beds	598	
Total no. of beds commissioned to the end of March 21 - Note 1	11,340	11,350

Note 1 - Difference relates to beds in use temporarily