



Géaroibríochtaí

Áras Dargan, An Ceantar Theas, An Bóthar Míleata, Cill Mhaighneann, Baile Átha Cliath 8

Acute Operations,

The Dargan Building, Heuston South Quarter, Military Road, Dublin 8

23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022

**Deputy Bernard J Durkan**  
**Dáil Éireann**  
**Leinster House**  
**Dublin 2**

**PQ 61611/22**

**To ask the Minister for Health if adequate emergency beds can be provided wherever required but particularly in accident and emergency hospitals on call where ambulances are queuing up while awaiting the admission of a patient; if he will identify the precise steps required to address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Durkan,

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.

Key challenges placing pressure on emergency departments include,

- Demographic pressures – a growing and ageing population resulting in increased demands for services, including a 15% increase in patients >75 years. ED attendances year to date are over 1.3 million, an increase of 7.65% (almost 95,000 people) versus the same period in 2019.
- Covid 19, Influenza and RSV placing increased pressure on hospital capacity.
- Increasing Length of stay due to continuing volumes of Covid-19 cases and the ageing population, and increasing levels of delayed transfers of care (DTCs).
- Challenges managing delayed transfers of care due to nursing home closures and providers struggling to source homecare.

Investment in capacity over the last number of years has been significant and has provided additional beds, staffing and equipment across hospital and community services.

A total of 1228 new acute beds have been funded, with 970 beds expected to be delivered by the end of the year. A three-year unscheduled care improvement programme is underway to deal with pressures in Emergency Departments with short-term immediate actions being taken by hospital sites and CHOs to alleviate current pressures this winter. The HSE Winter Plan 2022/23 has been specifically developed to address the challenges by providing additional capacity and resources to meet the ongoing increases in activity, and in particular in the winter period.



This winter, the HSE is investing over €168 million, including 608 wholetime equivalent posts, to support hospitals and community services to implement a range of initiatives to optimise patient care and improve patient experience during this challenging period.

Areas of particular focus include:

- Building Capacity
- Development of alternative pathways of care
- Planning around Covid, Influenza and RSV surges.

In addition you should note that the HSE is purchasing private hospital capacity over the coming weeks to support hospitals in this period of expected high activity.

I trust this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jacqueline McNulty'.

**Jacqueline McNulty**  
**General Manager Unscheduled Care**  
**Acute Operations**