

CC/ROD/MC

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16<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Mr Richard O'Donoghue,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 5481/22

**\* To ask the Minister for Health the number of operations and treatments that were cancelled in University Hospital Limerick in 2021; when these appointments will be rescheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Richard O'Donoghue**

Dear Deputy O'Donoghue,

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 Covid-19 pandemic resulted in significant disruption to health services across the country. Scheduled care across our hospitals has been particularly impacted. The reduction in scheduled care was in line with national policy on pandemic response.

Following the most recent surge of COVID-19 infection, scheduled hospital services, including surgery, endoscopy and outpatient appointments, have been re-introduced across the sites of UL Hospitals Group as the rate of community transmission of COVID-19 continues to decline.

UL Hospitals Group is committed to ensuring that all patients whose appointments were deferred during the COVID-19 pandemic will be rescheduled as soon as possible. Time-critical cases remain prioritised, and the hospital is directly contacting patients about their new appointments as soon as these are scheduled. In addition, theatre lists have resumed across UHL, St John's, Ennis, Nenagh and Croom Orthopaedic Hospitals. Outpatient departments in the hospitals are also at full resumption.

While the pandemic was a major factor for day-case and inpatient procedures being cancelled by the hospital, appointments can also be cancelled for other reasons, including by the patients themselves or their parents/guardians. In total, 4,336 inpatient and day case procedures were cancelled at University Hospital Limerick. Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, during 2021, 38,536 inpatient and day-case procedures took place at University Hospital Limerick.

There are a number of scheduled care initiatives operating across UL Hospitals Group to address waiting lists. These come under the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), Hospital Safety Net Service Agreement and the Advanced Clinical Prioritisation Programme. Under the Private Hospital Safety Net Service Agreement, UL Hospitals Group has referred urgent surgical and medical cases to private hospitals.

As well as these initiatives, virtual clinics are being used across our services as a means of identifying patients who can be progressed to in-person treatment, whether for diagnostic imaging, minor procedures, or full episodes of care.

Enhanced access to scheduled care has been highlighted by the Department of Health as a priority for inclusion in the HSE's 2022 Service Plan, and the need to address access and waiting list challenges is a key strategic priority in the HSE's corporate plan. The HSE has established a Scheduled Care Transformation Programme to ensure a sustained, system-wide transformation process that tackles the challenge of scheduled care waiting times, improves access to scheduled care services, and ensures the safe delivery of care in the context of the on-going pandemic.

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

Yours sincerely,



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**Colette Cowan**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**UL Hospitals Group**