

CC/PT/MC

28th February 2022

Mr Peadar Toibin,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 7438/22

*** To ask the Minister for Health the number of hospital appointments which were cancelled, postponed and rescheduled in University Hospital Limerick in each of the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, in tabular form. - Peadar Tóibín**

Dear Deputy Toibin,

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.

In total, 41,687 outpatient appointments were cancelled during 2021 at University Hospital Limerick. While the pandemic was a major factor for appointments being cancelled by the hospital, appointments were also cancelled for other reasons, including by the patients themselves or their parents/guardians. During 2021 for example, 7,322 outpatient appointments had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 precautions. In addition, 4,311 appointments were cancelled because the patient was unavailable (including through illness), because the appointment was rebooked or because the appointment was no longer required.

Please see below data in relation to the total number of cancelled outpatient appointments for 2019, 2020, and 2021 at University Hospital Limerick:

Year	Cancellations
2019	35,261
2020	50,594
2021	41,687

In addition, please see below appointments rescheduled for 2019, 2020 and 2021 at University Hospital Limerick:

Year	Rescheduled Count
2019	24,244
2020	52,073
2021	50,533

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.

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.

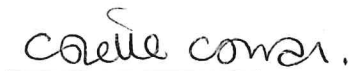
There are also a number of key drivers which will help improve waiting lists in 2022 including the recruitment of additional:

- Consultants
- NCHDs
- Advance Nurse Practitioners
- Clinical Nurse Specialists
- Extended Scope Physiotherapists
- Clerical/Admin Staff Grades

I can advise in relation to outpatient appointments that during 2021, 204,278 in-person appointments and 57,862 virtual appointments took place at University Hospital Limerick. This compares to 169,827 in-person appointments and 54,874 virtual appointments in 2020.

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

Yours sincerely,



Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group