

CC/DC/MC

Email: pgmidwestacute@hse.ie

08th March 2022

Mr David Cullinane TD,
Dàil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 4824/23 PQ 4825/23

To ask the Minister for Health the number of beds at University Hospital Limerick, by bed classification, at the start of each year from 2000 to 2023, in tabular form.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -David Cullinane

To ask the Minister for Health the number of acute inpatient beds at University Hospital Limerick at the start of each year from 2000 to 2023, in tabular form.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -David Cullinane

Dear Deputy Cullinane

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Please see below for a breakdown outlining the inpatient bed capacity at University Hospital Limerick since 2008. Inpatient bed capacity at University Hospital Limerick increased by 155 inpatient beds between 2008 and 2021. In 2008, University Hospital Limerick had 375 inpatient acute beds and today there are currently 530 inpatient acute beds, of which 51 are paediatric beds. Please note, data prior to 2008 is not available.

Year	Inpatient bed capacity
2008	375
2009	375
2010	375
2011	380
2012	358
2013	354
2014	356
2015	385
2016	430
2017	447
2018	452
2019	450
2020	450

2021	530
2022	530
2023	530

University Hospital Limerick added 98 beds and 10 critical care beds in response to the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020/2021. This new capacity enabled us to keep vulnerable patients safe, including haematology, oncology and renal patients; to provide a safe pathway for people attending UHL for surgery; and to isolate COVID-19 positive patients.

Other capital developments since 2009 include a €24m Emergency Department which opened in May 2017 at University Hospital Limerick. The adjoining Dialysis Unit, which was completed as part of the same contract, provides state-of-the-art accommodation and facilities for renal patients.

In addition, the Leben Building which opened in 2016 is a €16.5 million six story building which consists of a Neurological Centre/ Acute Stroke Unit, Breast Unit, Dermatology Centre and Cystic Fibrosis Unit. The Leben building has been financed by the HSE with significant contributions from the Mid-Western Hospitals Development Trust, the Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland, TLC4CF, the Parkinson's Association of Ireland and the JP McManus Benevolent Fund.

A new €40m Critical Care Block at UHL was also opened. The facility provides a large range of services, including a Critical Care Unit and High Dependency Unit, a 16 bed Acute Cardiac Care Unit and a step down facility.

Our next significant project in terms of bed capacity is the 96-bed block for UHL. Work commenced on the new 96-bed inpatient block at University Hospital Limerick in September 2022 following the appointment of John Sisk and Son as the successful contractor.

The construction phase will take at least two years to complete. Thereafter the new facility will also have to be equipped and commissioned for use before being put into operation. The project represents a total capital investment of in excess of €90 million.

This important project is the next step in addressing the acknowledged deficits in inpatient bed capacity in the UL Hospitals Group and the Mid West. The new 9,800 square-metre block will be built over the existing Emergency Department and Dialysis Unit and will consist of 96 en-suite single rooms. Approximately half of the beds will be new beds for inpatients while the remainder will be replacement beds allowing us to close or refurbish some of the more outdated inpatient accommodation on the site. This will allow for greater compliance with national guidelines and international best practice on infection prevention and control.

We welcome the commitment from the Taoiseach during a recent briefing to Mid-West Oireachtas Members to support the delivery of a second 96-bed inpatient block at University Hospital Limerick.

A capital funding submission is currently being finalised in conjunction with HSE Capital & Estates. UL Hospitals Group are keen that the delivery of the second 96-bed block be fast-tracked and that funding be secured in the HSE Capital Plan to deliver the additional inpatient bed block in as short a timeframe as possible. We expect

that proposals will be submitted to the HSE nationally in respect of this second 96-bed block before the end of the first quarter of this year.

In addition, the UL Hospitals Group site masterplan envisages a third inpatient bed block at the front of the site. This block is intended as part of the overall bed capacity solution. It is a medium term priority with the current focus on securing funding for the second 96-bed block.

Historical bed capacity shortages in the Mid-West region have been well documented. ULHG has the lowest inpatient bed capacity when benchmarked per population against other Model 4 Hospitals, an additional 200 inpatient beds would be required to bring ULHG in line with the national average. In addition, there is also a need for another 100 replacement beds to replace the bed stock on the nightingale wards and reduce the wards to a more appropriate occupancy of 4 bedded wards in line with HIQA guidance.

The reconfiguration of health services in the region a number of years ago led to bed closures in Nenagh and Ennis Hospitals. Unfortunately, new capacity was not provided to make up for these shortcomings namely due to the global financial crisis of 2008.

Below is a breakdown of how inpatient bed capacity and emergency attendances at UHL compare to other Model 4 hospitals:

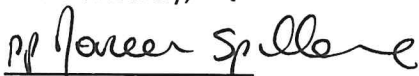
Hospital	Inpatient beds	ED attendances 2021
St James' Hospital	698	48,397
UHL	530 (including 51 Paediatric beds)	76,473
Mater	614	89,335
St Vincent's University Hospital	510	60,748
University Hospital Galway	618	68,887

We welcome the recent significant investment and bed capacity provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (outlined in further detail below), however it does not sufficiently address the well-documented bed capacity shortcomings in the Mid-West region, nor does it adequately address the continuing growth in demand for emergency care.

In addition to inpatient bed capacity shortages, there is a need to significantly increase the number of NCHDs employed at University Hospital Limerick in order to alleviate growing pressures and to support new Consultant posts approved by government in recent years.

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

Yours sincerely,



Prof Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group