

CC/MB/MD

Email: pqmidwestacute@hse.ie

12th January 2023

Martin Browne TD
Dàil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 1237/23

*** To ask the Minister for Health the role that Nenagh Hospital can play in meeting the demand for emergency department treatment given the record number of presentations to UHL recently. -Martin Browne**

Dear Deputy Browne,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your representation in relation to the above matter.

UL Hospitals Group comprises six hospitals working as a single system. Model 2 hospitals like Nenagh are integral how we provide our services across the three counties – all in line with national policy including the Smaller Hospitals Framework.

All of our model 2 hospitals responded as part of the recent major internal incident declared at UHL arising from overcrowding and service pressures and resulting from the wave of respiratory illness in our region and across northern Europe.

Surge capacity was opened in Nenagh with the surgical day ward opened to accommodate additional medical patients. The additional capacity created at Nenagh has allowed us to accommodate up to 12 extra patients. Staff in Nenagh have worked additional hours over the weekend in line with the national call for the health service to move to an enhanced seven-day model for the duration of this crisis.

Unfortunately, this has resulted in a number of surgical patients being cancelled in Nenagh during the week commencing January 9th. The use of the surgical day ward in Nenagh as surge capacity is being kept under review by the Hospital Crisis Management Team, which is currently meeting twice-daily.

All patients affected by these cancellations will be contacted by hospital staff and will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

The Medical Assessment Unit (GP referral) and the Injury Unit at Nenagh Hospital are both available to patients who might otherwise attend our ED at UHL. Activity at both the Injury Unit and Medical Assessment Units increased again during 2022, with both services having seen their busiest years on record.

Injury Unit attendances increased from 7,860 in 2021 to 10,216 last year, an increase of 30%.



Attendances at the Medical Assessment Unit grew from 1,338 in 2021 to 2,476 last year, an increase of 85%.

As you may be aware, a new ambulance pathway allowing NAS paramedics to bring stable medical patients to the MAU in Ennis Hospital commenced this week, Monday January 9th.

A key element is a telephone referral from the treating paramedic to the receiving MAU doctor, which ensures that the right patient is brought to the MAU. This pathway will result in patients receiving medical treatment in a hospital closer to their home, will reduce patient presentations to Emergency Departments and will release ambulances more quickly to respond to other emergency calls.

We are pleased with the progress of this initiative in Ennis in the first three days. An evaluation of the new pathway involving our MAU physicians and our partners in NAS will be necessary before a decision is made on any expansion of the service.

However, we have every expectation of success for this new pathway, with a view to continuing the service in Ennis MAU and, with the agreement of NAS and the HSE, expanding it to our medical assessment units in Nenagh and St John's hospitals.

Outside of what Nenagh can do to reduce demand on our Emergency Department, the hospital continues to provide excellent care for medical inpatients, ambulatory care, chronic disease management and for patients attending for day surgery, endoscopy and outpatient appointments. The opening of the Regional Hub for Women's Health in 2022 shows how local staff in Nenagh will work with the HSE nationally to develop services for the wider region.

Patient satisfaction with Nenagh Hospital remains high. In the National Inpatient Experience Survey 2022, Nenagh Hospital achieved an overall satisfaction rating of 88% compared to a national average of 82%.

We will continue to seek opportunities to develop services in Nenagh.

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