



**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd TD**  
**Dail Eireann**  
**Leinster House**  
**Kildare street**  
**Dublin 2**

**18<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**Re PQ No 33327/23: To ask the Minister for Health to provide an update on the Programme for Government commitment to support community specialist palliative homecare teams in all HSE areas, fund designated home care packages, and resource specialist palliative care provided in hospices since the establishment of the current Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy O'Dowd,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above referenced parliamentary question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health.

In Ireland, specialist palliative care services are delivered by the HSE in partnership with voluntary agencies to provide integrated, high quality and accessible palliative care to patients and their families. Specialist palliative care is provided by multidisciplinary teams in acute hospitals, specialist palliative care inpatient units (hospices) and in community settings by community palliative care teams (homecare teams). Consultants in palliative medicine have contracted hours across all three settings ensuring seamless transitions and integrated services for patients and their families.

A fully developed specialist palliative care unit (hospice) comprises in-patient beds, out-patient services and bereavement services. In 2023, there are 14 specialist palliative care inpatient units (hospices) providing a total of 276 beds across the country. This is an increase of 49 beds since 2020. Recent developments include the opening of new hospices in Wicklow (2020), Mayo (2019) and Waterford (2021). Plans are progressing for three further units in Drogheda, Tullamore and Cavan to ensure all regions have access to a specialist palliative care inpatient unit in line with national policy. In 2022 there were 4,118 admissions to specialist palliative care inpatient units. This represents a 7% increase in comparison to 2020 (3,354). 97% of patients were admitted within 7 days of referral.

There are 32 community specialist palliative care (home care) teams covering all 26 counties. The community specialist palliative care teams work in close partnership with GP's and primary care teams and provide expert palliative care to both adults and children in all community settings including nursing homes. In 2022 community palliative care teams provided care to an average of 3,592 patients each month in their own homes. This was an 8.3% increase from 2020 (3,316) and reflects the increased demand for palliative care services in the community. In partnership with the Irish Cancer Society and Irish Hospice Foundation, the HSE also delivers Night Nursing care to patients receiving specialist palliative care to enable people die at home and provide respite to carers during end of life care. In 2022, 2,943 patients received Night Nursing care in their own homes utilising an average of three nights of care per patient.

Funding provided for specialist palliative care in NSP 2022 (€2.4m) and NSP 2023 (€2.8m) provided for the enhancement of both adult and children's palliative care services in the community including

- Additional staffing for community specialist palliative care teams in line with workforce recommendations from 2001 Adult Palliative Care Policy (DoH)



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- Enhanced provision of Night Nursing Services in partnership with Irish Cancer Society and Irish Hospice Foundation
- Expansion of LauraLynn *Hospice in the Home* service
- Additional Clinical Nurse Specialists to enhance availability of out-of-hours palliative care supports for patients in the community.

I trust this is in order and answers your query.

Regards,

  
Maurice Dillon

**Maurice Dillon**  
**HSE National Lead for Palliative Care, Operations Planning**