

Injury Units- Standardising Opening Hours 8am to 8pm 7/7

Status Update 19th July 2024

Context

In 2012, Emergency Medicine Programme (EMP) recommended establishment of IUs in Model 2 Hospitals. The aim of IUs are to provide unscheduled emergency care for patients with non-life threatening or limb threatening injuries, as conveniently as possible, while ensuring patient safety and equitable standards of care within an Emergency Care Network.

In 2023, a National Injury Unit Review was undertaken by a HSE Working Group who made a series of recommendations to improve the service. The 2023 Review was adopted by the HSE EMT and forms part of the HSE three year UEC Plan. It was also shared with the Department of Health.

Two of the key recommendations set out in the Review are;

- Expansion of all existing IUs to operate from 8am to 8pm and consistent naming of all Injury Units
- Plan for additional Injury Units (in the order of a further 10 units) to provide national IU coverage. The planning for this additional capacity including potential delivery options is ongoing and will be subject to provision of capital and revenue funding.

This report provides an update on governance and standardising the opening hours of the existing injury units to offer an 8am to 8pm seven days per week service

Governance of Injury Units

Currently there are 13 IUs supporting urgent and emergency care along with two interim IU services via private providers (Naas and Cork) which were stood up during Winter 2023/2024 to support access (see appendix 1).

At present, 12 of the HSE IUs are under acute hospital governance. Work is well underway to bring Cashel IU under the clinical governance of South Tipperary University Hospital, Clonmel. It is important to note that this IU will also require significant investment to maintain the current service and to bring it in line with the standardised approach and recommendations as set out in the Review. It is envisaged that these additional resources will be sought via the 2025 Estimates process.

Standardising Opening Hours of Existing Injury Units

Emergency Medicine Programme staffing guidelines for IUs describes the staffing required to manage IU - This is predicated on availability of existing services and facilities such as radiology at the IU location. This means that IUs may or may not require additional staff which form part of a wider staffing pool within the overall location.

The 2023 Review recommended a number of additional WTEs consistent with the EMP guidelines to support the delivery of standardized IU operational service. PNNs to support 15 WTEs were provided in NSP 2024 aligned with EMP guidelines.

However, it appears that the Review did not provide any detailed recommendations to address any other ancillary resources necessary to give effect to the longer opening hours, outsourced services such as diagnostics etc.

The majority of HSE injury units now operate a 7 day services on an 8am to 8pm basis and the HSE ambition is to for all Injury Units to be operational form 8am to 8pm on a 7/7 basis from Q3 202 (with the exception of Cashel that requires significant investment).

The status update on the remaining units to achieve this standardized approach is set out in Table I.

Injury Unit	Plan to Achieve Standardised Opening Hours 8am to 8pm 7/7
Mercy Hospital Cork	MUH have commenced the recruitment process of ANP's/candidate ANP's, NCHD's and support staff. NCHD's will be available by end Q3 2024; there will be two ANP's who can work opposite each other potentially in September (dependant on start date/release from another HSE facility) to facilitate the increase opening hours. There is a dedicated space for these two ANP's to work opposite each other.
Bantry Hospital, Cork	Currently operating 8am-7pm, will be operating 8am-8pm from mid-August 2024
St. John's Hospital, Limerick	Currently opened 8am to 7pm. Recruitment ongoing and plan in place to be operational 8 to 8 – Q3 2024
St.Colmcilles, Loughlinstown	SCH management have given a commitment that they will be in a position standardise the opening hours of the LIU to 0800 -2000hrs, 7 days a week in Q3 2024.
Mater /Smithfield	Planning in progress to standardised opening- potential funding required to support ancillary costs associated with outsourcing diagnostics and other support services (e.g, security)
Cashel IU Tipperary	This unit will require significant investment to align with all other Injury Units opening hours- Business case recently submitted to Access and Integration for assessment. Resources to be sought via Estimates 2025. Clinical governance arrangements from South Tipperary UH ongoing

Table 1.

Appendix I- Existing Injury Units

1. Ennis
2. Mallow
3. Bantry
4. Cork City
5. North Dublin – Smithfield/ Mater
6. South Dublin- St Colmcilles Loughlinstown/ SVUH
7. St Johns, Limerick
8. Nenagh
9. Louth Co Hopsital , Dundalk
10. Monaghan Hospital
11. Roscommon Hospital
12. Mullingar

13. Cashel Injury Unit-

There is agreement in principle to transfer the governance of the Cashel LIU to TippUH/ED.

Cashel LIU currently under the governance of CHO 5 operates **Mon – Fri, 0900-1700** (closes for 1 hour for lunch), is staffed by with 1 WTE Registrar, 1 WTE RGN, and 1 WTE Clerical Officer from community. Radiography staff is provided by South TippUH - this has led to restricted availability to Xray on site due to staffing constraints at times.

The current Nursing staff in Cashel LIU 1 WTE is a post that is job shared by 2 RGN's, 1 has retired and the remaining RGN is due to retire imminently. This poses a risk to the closure of the current Cashel LIU due to the challenge of recruitment of appropriately trained staff.

To support the transfer of the governance of Cashel LIU and standardisation and stabilisation of service delivery as per Emergency Medicine Programme recommendations, a business case has been submitted to National Access and Integration Office outlining the funding and staffing required. Recruitment of appropriately trained staff will be a challenge.

Pilot Injury Units – Stood Up Winter 2023/2024

- Naas
- South Side Cork City

It is envisaged that a procurement process to continue the provision of IU services will occur pending approval and delivery of the HSE IU Expansion Plan