

CORRESPONDENCE

**MEETING OF THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF
ADARE-RATHKEALE**

MARCH, 2019

- Email received on 18th February, 2019 from Simon Harris T.D, Minister of Health in reply to letter concerning the shortage of hospital beds for vulnerable patients.

From: Ashling_Flavin@health.gov.ie [mailto:Ashling_Flavin@health.gov.ie] **On Behalf Of** Minister's_Office@health.gov.ie
Sent: 18 February 2019 12:21
To: Customer Services <customerservices@limerick.ie>
Subject: the shortage of hospital beds for vulnerable patients

18 February 2019

Ms Karen Butler
Meetings Administrator
Adare/Rathkeale Municipal District
Limerick City and County Council
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Dear Ms Butler

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the shortage of hospital beds for vulnerable patients.

As Minister for Health, I recognise that hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months. It is against this background that the Health Service Capacity Review 2018 recommended an increase in acute hospitals beds of over 2,600 by 2031 to support the projected increase in demand for services in the years ahead.

Increasing capacity is therefore a priority for the Government. Over the past 12 months, an additional 240 beds have been opened, including 17 additional beds in University Hospital Limerick.

A Capacity Programme for 2019 has been agreed which provides for the following increases to capacity, as set out in the National Service Plan 2019

- 78 additional beds are planned for Quarter 1 of 2019, including the 40 bed modular build in South Tipperary General Hospital, the 30-bed ward in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda, 4 HDU beds in the Mater Hospital and 4 HDU beds in Cork University Hospital;
- 75 acute beds, including 8 additional beds in University Hospital Limerick and 70 community beds to come on stream in 2019, as part of the Winter Plan 2018/19. Of the 75 acute beds, the HSE have confirmed that 40 have already opened, including 5 at University Hospital Limerick;
- preparation of 202 beds, of which 16 are critical care, by quarter 4 2019 with a view to bringing this extra capacity into operation in the first quarter of 2020.

There are two distinct proposals for development of ward accommodation at University Hospital Limerick.

The HSE is working towards appointing a design team for the new 96 acute ward block in

University Hospital Limerick. The timeframe for the completion of the project will be informed by the work of the project team and this work will be undertaken in conjunction with UHL and the HSE. The required capital allocation for the project is being reviewed in preparing the 2019 capital plan.

Last autumn I announced that a modular ward block would be built at UHL to provide interim accommodation. This 60 Bed Ward Block will directly increase capacity allowing patients access to an increased overall bedstock and improve patient flow across the hospital.

I am happy to confirm that the development of a new ward block at University Hospital Limerick has been included in the National Development Plan, announced last year as part of the Project Ireland 2040 policy initiative.

All stages of capital projects, including the design and tendering processes, are subject to review to ensure that the projects deliver value for money. This includes, where possible, 'future proofing' to ensure that capital developments meet not just current standards, but that provision is made for additional capacity and / or improved equipping and that these are addressed appropriately.

Following the publication of the Health Service Executive's National Service Plan for 2019, the Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019.

The development of additional beds at University Hospital Limerick and other health capital projects, currently at various stages of development, are being considered as part of the process of developing the Health Service Executive's Capital Plan for 2019.

Yours sincerely

Simon Harris T.D.
Minister for Health

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