

The Corkman

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Twenty vacancies at Mallow General Hospital

The number of medical, nursing and care posts vacant in Mallow General Hospital was raised in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy Michael Moynihan.

“Mallow General Hospital has had large investment in its theatres and so forth in recent times,” he said. “Right through various crises this year, especially in the earlier part of the year from January to March, the theatres were closed for a long time. Up to and including 1 April, there were four weeks when no work was going on there because of issues, and at that time there was massive pressure on Cork University Hospital, CUH, and on the city hospitals.”

In reply, Health Minister Simon Harris said there are approximately 20 staff vacancies at present in Mallow General Hospital across medical, nursing and health and social care. “The HSE has advised me that the overwhelming majority of these posts have been sanctioned for funding and we are awaiting the advertisement through the national recruitment services division,” he said. “I will ask for that to happen urgently.”

The Minister said there is definitely capacity in some of the smaller hospitals and he wanted more done there. “I am told that there are very few medical post vacancies in Mallow General Hospital and the majority of vacancies are nursing posts. I would be very happy to visit Mallow General Hospital in due course to meet the management there and to look at what the opportunities are to expand services there.”

Concern over reduction in respite care services in Cork

The provision of respite care services available for parents and guardians of children with intellectual disabilities in Cork and Kerry (CHO 4) was raised in the Dáil by Sinn Féin Deputy Pat Buckley.

“A reply to a parliamentary question which was submitted states that, from 2017 to Quarter 2 of 2018, service hours have gone down,” he said. “The reply states that the provision of residential respite services has come under increased pressure in recent years. It does not say weeks or days but years, so the Department has known about it for some time. We are getting the same answers over and over again but why is nothing being done? The services are being cut but the demand is increasing.”

In reply, Minister of State Finian McGrath said as part of its ongoing service provision, this year the HSE will provide more than 182,500 overnight and 42,500 day respite sessions throughout the country. “In Cork, respite services are provided by COPE, the Brothers of Charity, CoAction, St. Joseph’s Foundation and Enable Ireland,” he said. “This year community healthcare organisation (CHO 4) has been able to develop a respite house in west Cork from within existing resources. This house will open on a phased basis from next week and will be open to referrals for respite across County Cork. A number of alternative respite services have been very successful in Cork, with more than 800 children and adults benefiting.”

This year, he said HSE CHO 4 has provided in excess of 17,000 respite nights and 2,000 respite day services to people with a disability. More than 900 people with a disability have accessed respite services across CHO 4.

Huge escalation in insurance premium at St Joseph's, Charleville

The escalation in the cost of the insurance premium for St Joseph's Hospital, Charleville from €150,000 to €500,000 was raised in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy Michael Moynihan.

He told Taoiseach Leo Varadkar that some time ago, Section 38 organisations (organisations defined to provide a defined level of service on behalf of the HSE) were taken under the remit of the State Claims Agency, SCA, along with all of the associated insurance matters. However, it transpired then that insurance premiums for Section 39 (organisations grant-aided by the HSE) organisations escalated.

“Some scoping work has been done within the HSE and the Department of Health on the SCA taking over the insurance policies of Section 39 organisations dealing with intellectual difficulties,” he said. “Where is that process and what is happening in relation to it?”

In reply the Taoiseach said the SCA falls under the remit of the Minister for Finance who was in Washington but he would ask him to correspond with Deputy Moynihan.