

SHOW UHW THE MONEY!

As of Tuesday last, March 26th, University Hospital Waterford (UHW) had received 'no formal confirmation' in relation to the funding or staffing of the 72 isolation beds provided for in its new Dunmore Wing.

This was disclosed to Waterford TD David Cullinane (SF) by UHW General Manager Grace Rothwell in the wake of a Parliamentary Question tabled by the Deputy to Health Minister Simon Harris (FG).



According to Ms Rothwell: "The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I may advise that as of today's date (March 26th), no formal confirmation has been received regarding funding for the Dunmore Wing at UHW." In a separate PQ (also dated March 26th), Deputy Cullinane asked Minister Harris if "additional staff that will be recruited at UHW to facilitate the opening of the new Dunmore Wing at the hospital, by whole-time equivalent posts and by profession, that is, nursing, junior doctors, consultants, maintenance staff, clerical, administration, diagnostics and others; and if he will make a statement on the matter".

To this, Ms Rothwell replied: "I may advise that as of today's date, no formal confirmation has been received regarding recruitment of additional staff for the Dunmore Wing at UHW." Speaking to The Munster Express, Deputy Cullinane said: "Firstly, this building is a fantastic addition for UHW and that it's almost ready to be handed over to management is welcome news, but management has yet to receive any assurances about the operational monies required for additional funding and staffing, and that means we may not end up with any additional capacity, and that would be a shame."

He continued: "Management have capital funding from the South East Community Health Organisation (CHO) to fund the Palliative Care services on the first two floors of the wing, while the top three floors, which will consist of 72 isolation beds, will come from the South South West Hospital Group to fund Acute Services in the wing. This funding will equip and kit out the three floors (above the Palliative Care Unit) with all the necessary diagnostic equipment and so on, but what management don't have is additional revenue for current spends and operational funding which is necessary to hire staff required to open up the beds."

It's understood that if additional funding is not required, then management will force to redeploy staff from existing units at UHW, which would make additional bed capacity at Ardkeen highly unlikely.

David Cullinane's understanding was that the additional 72 beds in the Dunmore Wing would lead to a boost in staffing and resources at UHW. "There isn't any funding for additional resources at this point in time but that doesn't necessarily mean that these new beds won't be made available - they may not be able to open all of them - but in order to open some of them, it looks like management will have to relocate staff from existing units to open and manage any of the new beds."

He added: "If you're going to provide the capital funding to build a unit and to reach the point we're at now where the wing is almost ready for opening and just needs to be equipped and kitted out in the absence of parallel funding for the operational side of things in terms of staffing the new wing, that to me seems quite haphazard. It shows a lack of joined-up planning

within the health service and within our acute services. Both funding streams should be done in tandem, in my view.” In response to media queries over the weekend about the funding and staffing of the Dunmore Wing, a spokesperson for the South South West Hospital Group stated that the “Group is currently working with the HSE to progress the opening of this development”.

It’s understood that the Dunmore Wing would cost €7 million to resource at full working capacity, and Deputy Cullinane will raise this matter at a forthcoming meeting between Oireachtas members and the South South West Hospital Group. He contended: “We seem to have to fight harder for additional resources into Waterford and the South East, it feels like we always have to work harder than any other region to get what we need here; after all we needed local fundraising to get the Palliative Care Unit built but it had to be done and the people of the city, county and region came up trumps on that front. That there’s any doubt at all about revenue funding for the new unit is very worrying.”