



Rannan na nOspideil Ghearmhíochaine
Aonad 4A – Áras Dargan
An Ceantar Theas
An Bothar Mileata
Cill Mhaighneann
BÁC 8

Acute Operations
Health Service Executive
Unit 4A - The Dargan Building
Heuston South Quarter
Military Road
Kilmainham
Dublin 8.

Our Reference Number: C147/21

2nd March 2021

Michael Sullivan

By Email freepressire@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Sullivan,

Thank you for your recent request, made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for the following:

I would like to be sent the full occupancy rates and numbers for all Irish hospitals under the direction of the HSE for the past four years, broken down by month. Specifically only people we were admitted to hospitals, not out patients who were on a list. ONLY people who were in the hospital for treatment should be included.

I wish to advise you that following consideration of the provisions of the Act, a final decision has been made to **grant you access to records** in relation to this request and the purpose of this letter is to explain the decision. The explanation has the following parts:

- 1. Context**
- 2. Records to which access is granted**
- 3. A statement of how you can appeal this decision should you wish to do so**

This letter addresses each of these parts in turn.

1. Context

Average Acute Bed occupancy levels have remained steady nationally (a decrease of 0.2% from 80% in December 2020 to 79.8% in January 2021). However, there is a 16% drop in occupancy levels reported compared to the same time period in 2020 and 2019. As occupancy is based on the total number of beds, this is not an accurate picture as many acute sites are reporting closed or blocked beds due to the effect of COVID 19 on services. This results in local outbreaks, redesigned operational pathways for streaming, cohorting of positive patients and where there is significant staff absence, the inability to staff wards.

The Health Service Capacity Review 2018 identified that occupancy levels across the acute hospital system in Ireland are far in excess of international norms. These levels of occupancy compromise patient safety, contribute to the spread of healthcare associated infections, and impede the efficient and effective use of resources and reduce the availability of surge capacity. The Review recommended the need to reduce inpatient bed occupancy levels from 95% to the international norm of 85%.

The Review forecast the need for a 40% increase in acute hospital beds in public hospitals, equating to an additional 5,360 beds. When account is taken of current potentially unsafe occupancy levels across the hospital system, this requirement increases to 7,150 beds. In this context funding has been provided for 1,146 across Winter 2020/21 and NSP 2021.

2. Records to which access is granted

Please see attached table with % occupancy rates for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 broken down by month and by hospital.

3. Rights of Appeal

You may appeal this decision.

In the event that you need to make such an appeal, you can do so by writing to the HSE Freedom of Information Office, 3rd Floor, Scott Building, Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore, Co Offaly. Your correspondence should include a fee of €30 for processing the appeal. Payment should be made by way of bank draft, money order, postal order or personal cheque made payable to the Health Service Executive. If you wish to make payment by electronic means, please contact emma.kelly@hse.ie. You should make your appeal within 4 weeks from the date of this notification, where a day is defined as a working day, excluding the weekend and public holidays. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances.

The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this body.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the above, please contact me by email catherinem.cullen@hse.ie.

Yours sincerely,



Catherine Cullen
FOI Decision Maker

Freedom of Information Act 2014: Summary of Review Rights

You are entitled to a review of the Health Service Executive's response to your FOI request.

For example, where the HSE decides to –

- Refuse your FOI request
- Exclude all or part of particular records
- Give access in a form other than as you request
- Charge a fee or deposit

The Act gives you the right to seek a review of such decision and actions.

Reasons for Decisions

If you sought reasons for a decision by a Public Body, you are also entitled to a review of the response to that request.

Decision on FOI Request.

A final decision on your request will normally be sent to you within 20 working days of its receipt. Where it is necessary to seek deposits or to consult third parties, this deadline is extended appropriately. If you have not received a decision within the allotted time you may assume that your request has been refused and you may appeal to the HSE for a review on the matter. Section 19 of the FOI Act 2014 refers.

Internal Appeal

If you are unhappy with the decision or response to your FOI request and wish to seek a review, you can do so by writing to the Freedom of Information Office, 3rd Floor, Scott Building, Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

You should state:

- The details of your initial request
- What decision or action you wish to have reviewed
- The reasons why you believe our response have been inadequate.

You will normally have 20 working days to seek a review but in appropriate circumstances late reviews will be allowed. The review is a full and new consideration of the matter carried out by a more senior member of staff of the HSE.

If you have not received a decision within the allotted time you may assume that your review has been refused and you may appeal to the Office of the Information Commissioner for a review on the matter. Section 22 of the FOI Act 2014 refers.

External Appeal

Where you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review, you can make a further review application to the:

Information Commissioner, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.