

HSE told to shift staff working patterns

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4–5 minutes

The Government has instructed the [HSE](#) to introduce “a more decisive shift” in staff working arrangements to ensure more services for patients are available over an extended day, into the evening, and at weekends.

Minister for Health [Stephen Donnelly](#) has directed the HSE board to focus this year on boosting productivity, as this would facilitate more patients being treated.

The Minister, in a formal instruction to the HSE in recent weeks, also ordered that funding for new developments in three of the largest public hospitals in the country – Beaumont, the Mater and Tallaght – be paused as a penalty until they introduce new management systems to monitor productivity.

Mr Donnelly told the HSE board that its “overarching objectives for 2025 must be improved efficiency and increased productivity, as well as the ongoing focus on improving the quality of care”.

The Minister urged the HSE to use provisions in the new contract for hospital consultants and agreements with unions going back to 2008 to facilitate more healthcare staff working across an extended day.

He said that arrangements for rostering staff for five days in a seven-day period – known as 5/7 day operations – “must be more widely and consistently adopted across the health service”.

He said the health service workforce had increased by 23 per cent since 2020 and that this process should be “accelerated in areas/locations where we can do it”.

“By optimising the use of our staff and equipment, including operating theatres and diagnostic capacity, we will reduce wait times for patients”, he said.

In a formal letter to HSE chairman Ciaran Devane on November 5th last, Mr Donnelly said additional funding, both current and capital should be “prioritised to areas, including voluntary organisation partners, that have fully engaged with the implementation of measures to enhance productivity, including the proactive adoption of the Health Performance Visualisation Platform (HPVP), the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) and the National Integrated Staff Records and Payroll System (NISRP)”.

He said such management systems represented “substantial and sustained investment by Government intended to improve the quality and relevance of

health information". HPVP is a data management platform for strategic and operational performance monitoring across acute hospitals.

"I note a number of voluntary hospitals have not gone live with HPVP. I am directing that all new development funding to these hospitals (Beaumont, the Mater and Tallaght), including capital and current, is paused until my Department receives formal notice that these hospitals have gone live on HPVP. Once they have gone live, the funding can be released."

The letter of determination, as it is known technically, sets out the Minister's policy priorities for the year for the health service.

It forms the basis of the HSE's annual service plan – the health agency's agreement with the Government on how its €25 billion budget this year will be spent.

Mr Donnelly has over the last year been pushing for greater productivity in the health service. He expressed concern earlier this year that the number of patients seen in out-patient clinics was falling, returning to this issue in his formal letter to the HSE chairman.

The Minister also told the HSE that its capital plan should allow for over 300 new hospital beds this year, including nearly 100 in Limerick. He said the plan should also allow for completion of donation the new national children's hospital.