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'DENIAL OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS' Twelve beds lying empty at the National Rehabilitation Hospital despite a waiting list of 226 patients

The hospital admitted that the beds are unoccupied because of lack of staff

EXCLUSIVE

BY RUAIRI COTTER

1st March 2017, 11:40 pm



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TWELVE beds at a specialist brain and spinal injuries facility are lying empty due to chronic staff shortages.

That is despite a waiting list of 226 patients currently seeking treatment.



The National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dun Laoghaire Co Dublin

The closure of the dozen beds at the National Rehabilitation Hospital has been slammed as a “denial of basic and universal human rights” by Reinhart Schaler, CEO of pressure group An Saol, whose son Padraig suffered a severe brain injury in 2013.

He told the Irish Sun: “At a time, when the NRH has waiting lists in excess of two years, as recently reported in the media, it is shocking to hear that they had to close beds because of staff shortages.



Padraig Schaler pictured with his father Reinhard

“The denial of rehabilitation services to injured citizens goes way beyond health, it’s a denial of the basic and universal human right to participate in life and be part of society. “This is an issue of justice and equality.

“We have experienced this personally with our son Pádraig and also with many other families who we have been in contact with.

“We fully support the campaign of the Neurological Alliance of Ireland ‘We need our heads examined’ and call on the government to make neurological rehabilitation a top priority, implementing the promises made in the HSE’s 2017 Service Plan.”

A spokesperson for the National Rehabilitation Hospital told the Irish Sun at least 50 extra pairs of hands are needed to get the twelve beds re-opened.

The Spokesperson said: “It is true to say that there are a number of beds empty right now.


“The situation changes almost daily and figures could change again by tomorrow, but 12 beds is a fair estimation.

“There are different types of beds in the centre. At the moment four of the 12 closed would be especially for spinal injuries while the other eight are suited for brain injuries.


“We had in recent times an increase in the complexity of our patients, the clinical need and the intensity of rehabilitation that is required.

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“So in order to have all our beds fully open we are in discussion with the HSE for additional staffing. That’s where things are at the minute. It is under discussion.”

The NRH admitted that while the situation wasn’t ideal for patients on waiting lists, submissions for extra staff have been sent to the HSE.

The spokesperson added: “At certain times, weekends and Christmas, longer weekends, our patients will go home as part of their rehab programme.

“What we are looking to do in an orderly way is slow down the process of everybody coming back at the one time.

“There are some beds unfilled but that is something we see as being temporary.

“The funding we are looking for is to increase our staffing levels, to have all beds at full capacity all of the time.

“A submission has gone to the HSE and is under discussion. You would be looking for a minimum of 50 additional

staffing at front-line level.

“It is important to add that the figure that did the rounds of 800 people on waiting lists was completely untrue. There are 226 at the moment.”

Meanwhile on the plans for a new building – which was shelved previously – The NRH said all signs are pointing to them reaching their opening day target.

A spokesperson said: “Everything is on target. The money is ring-fenced. It is going to be completed by 2019. It is going through the tendering and selection process for main contractor.”

It comes after Fine Gael’s Maura Hopkins blasted the HSE over the closures and called on them to deal with the issue immediately.

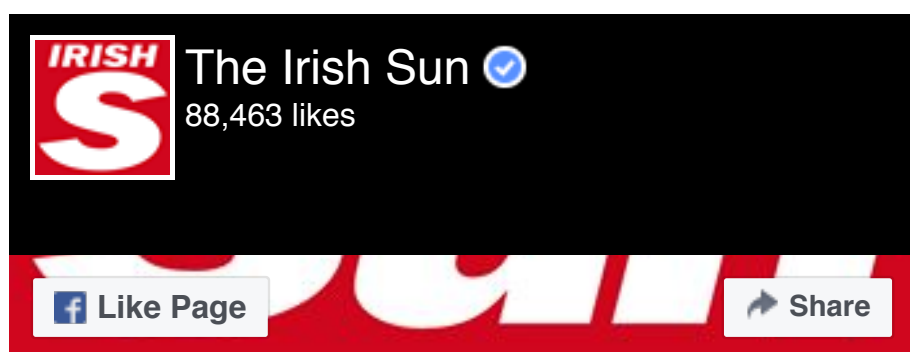
The Senator said: “Closing 12 existing beds out of 120 beds, 10%, is simply not acceptable.

“It is soul destroying for the parent, child and the family, as well as for people across the country who have to wait months for a bed in the NRH and during that time occupy an acute bed in a general hospital.

“Given the trauma of an injury, be that a stroke, a spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis or Parkinson’s disease, these people need access to timely and specialist rehabilitation.

“Confirmation that bed capacity has been reduced by 12 beds is simply not acceptable. I wrote to the Minister, Deputy Harris, last night.

“I asked him and I am asking the Leader now to ensure that the HSE deals with this issue immediately. It is simply not good enough.”



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A photograph showing a person's hands playing a slot machine game on a laptop. The screen displays various slot machine symbols and reels. The person is wearing a grey shirt.

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