



Commitment for Change

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More beds in clean hospitals


Labour

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There is not one person that I meet who does not have a story to tell about our hospitals. So many people stop me while I am around the country to tell me about the treatment that their mother, or child, or friend has received when they have fallen ill.

Yet another report or review group about the state of our health service will not cut the time of those waiting in hospitals to be seen now. What this problem needs is solutions – practical measures that will help this crisis in the short-term while the long-term picture of our health services is tackled head-on. What this needs is action now.

This is not a vague promise of 'better healthcare'. Rather, this is a clear goal – we will provide 2,300 more beds in hospitals.

How will we do this? Once in office we will instruct the HSE, within a strict deadline, to assess where beds are needed. Once we have the location of where these beds need to go – quite simply, we will make sure that they are delivered.

And they will be delivered to hospitals that will have better standards of hygiene than currently exist. No one can argue that the request for a clean hospital is a complex demand. This is about making sure that you leave hospital with fewer illnesses than when you entered.

Labour has published detailed plans for reform of the health services. We will invest in primary care, establish a patient safety authority and end the neglect of mental health services. We want a system based on universal health insurance, making sure that the money follows the patient. The urgent priority, however, is for more beds in clean hospitals. Unless we tackle this problem, we will not be able to end the shambles that is Ireland's health service.

This Commitment for Change has implications for planning and logistics which also must be tackled. But let's get the simple things right. And let's not let bureaucracy stand in the way.

Our communities need more beds in hospitals that are clean. Let's provide them.



Pat Rabbitte

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Cost

The monies to build 2,300 beds is already provided for in the National Development Plan. Once in place, the current cost of 2,300 beds is approximately €600million annually.

Time for Delivery

It will take seven years for all 2,300 beds to be fully-functional – the majority of which will be in place within the lifetime of the government.

Rationale

The rationale regarding the number of beds required within our health system is founded on the following issues:

- The fall in the number of acute beds in Ireland from the early 1980s to 2001.
- Ireland's recent and projected rise in population.
- The proportion of Ireland's population over 65, both now and in the future.
- Comparison of beds per capita with other countries, for both the population as a whole, and for the population over 65.
- High occupancy rates in existing hospitals, which are well in excess of the international norm of 85%.
- Unmet demands in the existing health system, both elective and non-elective.
- The potential for extract additional bed access from the existing stock of beds.

Accordingly, the ESRI has estimated that Ireland needs 2,300 acute in-patient beds.

Implementation

In office, we will mandate the HSE, within a strict deadline, to plan out the location of an additional 2,300 hospital beds so that an integrated plan can be developed and implemented. The provision of new capacity and replacement of existing facilities will also be tackled.

In addition to this, we will develop within the Department of Health the planning expertise to regularly update and review the capital needs of the hospital system. We will not repeat the current practices, where long-term planning is overlooked. Rather we will publish regular bed counts, assessment of future needs and information on the planning of future bed provision.

Regarding hospital hygiene, we will ensure the rigorous enforcement of strict cleaning regimes. Systems to ensure that there is clear responsibility and accountability for the day-to-day cleanliness standards will be a priority.

For more information, please contact

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