

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Mr Colm Gildernew MLA
Chair of the Committee for Health

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Your Ref: C250 /20

Our Ref: CORR-3505-2020

Date: 17th November 2020

Dear *Colm,*

Thank you for the correspondence from the Committee for Health dated 26 October 2020 requesting further information on the rationale informing the discharge policy set out in the Department of Health Permanent Secretary's letter of 25 April 2020, and figures in relation to bed capacity in hospitals at the time the letter was issued.

The Permanent Secretary's correspondence dated 25 April 2020 set out key changes to testing for COVID-19 at that time. The rationale for introducing arrangements for all patients to be tested for COVID-19 48 hours in advance of discharge from a hospital setting to a care home was to support providers and staff in the receiving care home to understand each resident's COVID-19 status, and to enable care homes to effectively plan for each resident's care needs.

On the matter of bed capacity, I can advise that on 25 April 2020 there were 2,121 beds occupied in hospitals across Northern Ireland of a total of 3,629 beds available as reported at that time; 177 of these beds were occupied by patients with a positive COVID-19 laboratory test.

It is important to note that the available bed capacity data at that time was derived solely from a live administrative system and as such these numbers were provisional. From the 19 October 2020 onwards, bed capacity data is now captured and reported as presented on the DoH COVID-19 dashboard which provides a more accurate reflection of hospital capacity levels.

I trust you will find this information useful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robin Swann'.

Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health



Committee for Health

Lynne Curran
DALO
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By email to: Lynne.Curran@health-ni.gov.uk

Cc: Wendy.Patterson@health-ni.gov.uk; Gillian.Seeds@health-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref.: C250 /20

26 October 2020

Dear Lynne,

Re: Committee Inquiry: COVID-19 and its impact of Care Homes

At its meeting on 22 October, the Committee for Health received a briefing from departmental officials on the current testing arrangements and discharge policy of hospital patients to care homes.

In the discussion following, reference was made to a letter on this matter issued on 25 April 2020, to health trust Chief Executives, by the Department of Health Permanent Secretary, Mr Richard Pengelly.

The Committee agreed to request further information on the rationale informing the discharge policy set out in the letter; and figures in relation to bed capacity in hospitals at the time the letter was issued.

I should be grateful, if you could provide a response by 9th November 2020.

Yours sincerely,

Committee for Health

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