

Office of the Taoiseach

10 March 2014

Dear Patricia and Reinhard,

Thank you for your letter regarding your family's experience with the health system in Ireland. My office has discussed the details of the letter with the Department of Health and I am after asking the Department's officials to get in contact with you without delay.

The anger, dissatisfaction and frustration that you feel are clear and understood. You are right that Pádraig should be able to receive care here in his own country, the place where his parents and friends live. But, as your experiences show, the health system that we have here at the moment is unsatisfactory; it is not able to provide health care for its patients when they need it most.

It is for this reason that the government is concentrating on changing the system. The White Paper on Universal Health Care will be published soon. It will lay out exactly how our vision for Universal Health Care will be implemented. Until then, emphasis is being put on changes that will improve waiting times, the flexibility of care staff and the standard of care for patients, and improvements have been made in these areas since Minister Reilly has come to office, despite budget cutbacks.

The rehabilitation treatment plan is drawn up by the Rehabilitation Team, in conjunction with the patient and his/her family, according to the personal needs of the patient. At the moment, there are three beds available in the National Rehabilitation Hospital for patients with acute needs / difficulties. Often treatment for these patients takes longer than usual. It is for this reason that the waiting times for these services are as they stand.

I understand that there have been improvements made on the average waiting time in the NRH since 2011. Moreover, four new doctors have been employed in 2013/14.

In May 2012, Minister Reilly announced that 25m euro would be put in the direction of the creation of a new Rehabilitation Centre with 120 beds. It is understood that this centre will function in the place of several old facilities.

In the light of the National Strategy and Policy for the Improvement of Rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011-2015, the FSS (*Note by Family: not sure what "FSS" refers to; the only reference we could find to this acronym is the Financial Shared Services (FSS) at the Department of Justice and Equality*) created the Programme for Clinical Rehabilitation Medicine. Its scope covers every part of the health system, from self-care to primary care, to secondary and preparatory. The programme for Rehabilitative Medicine is nearly finished with a care model for the provision of the rehabilitative services in Ireland that will be the foundation stone of the provision of services from now on.

Certainly, we have a lot to do still to improve our health system and to bring it up to international standards. That said, despite budget cuts, targeted investment is happening. The government is dedicated to creating new health services that are able to provide for the health needs of the people of Ireland.

I hope that Pádraig gets on well with his care, and I pray for his betterment and for your family.

Yours sincerely,

Enda Kenny