

## Press release

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# Minister for Health publishes the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 Implementation Report 2022

From [Department of Health \(/en/organisation/departments-of-health/\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departments-of-health/).

Published on 6 June 2023

Last updated on 13 June 2023

- 172 staff recruited to cancer services in 2022
- €20 million in new development funding for cancer services has improved access and reduced waiting times for patients
- €3 million support for cancer surgeries helped services return to 2019 volumes
- €3.4 million support for Rapid Access Clinics increased capacity and reduced waiting times
- €3 million for chemotherapy and immunotherapy provided support for more patients to receive treatment and for introduction of new treatments such as paediatric CAR-T cell therapy and radiolabelled therapy

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly has today published the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 Implementation Report 2022. The Report sets out the progress achieved on the improvement of cancer services and the delivery of better outcomes for patients, as set out in the 52 recommendations of the Strategy.

The Report measures the achievement of these recommendations against the key performance indicators, which focus on reducing preventable cancer, promoting early detection, and driving improvements in treatment and after-care for cancer patients.

Welcoming the publication of the Report, Minister Donnelly said:

"In 2022 we have recruited 172 additional staff to our cancer services, which represents a 20% increase in staffing for cancer services in Ireland. It is projected that our national incidence of cancer will continue to increase, and that it could double by 2045, and it is important that we continue to grow our cancer services to meet demand. We also now have over 200,000 people living after receiving a cancer diagnosis. This is a 50% increase over a decade, illustrating success of our National Cancer Strategies.

"The increased investment in 2021 and 2022 is benefitting patients, who are experiencing reduced waiting times and getting better care in our cancer centres. We must continue to invest in our cancer services, to deliver year-on-year improvements and build on the progress made in 2022."

Using new development funding in 2022, an additional €3 million was allocated to support cancer surgeries, ensuring a return to 2019 levels following disruption to these services in 2020 and 2021. Almost €3.5 million was provided to support early diagnosis and access to Rapid Access Clinics. This funding reduced waiting times for patients referred to Rapid Access Clinics and enabled hospitals to source additional access to diagnostics to address the shortfall of access experienced during the pandemic. It also allowed for the creation of additional posts in diagnostic and rapid access clinic services.

Further capital projects for cancer services were continued under the Capital Plan for 2022. This included the equipment (linear accelerators) replacement programme for St Luke's Radiation Oncology Network, expansion of the oncology day unit at Cork University Hospital, and progression of the replacement of Aseptic Compounding Units (ACUs) at Cork University Hospital and Tallaght University Hospital.

Just over €2 million was provided for enhancing radiotherapy services, supporting the recruitment of 25 additional staff across radiotherapy centres. This included the continued rollout of new and innovative forms of radiotherapy, facilitated by new development funding in 2022. Stereotactic Ablative Radiotherapy (SABR), a form of highly targeted radiotherapy has been expanded since its introduction and has been delivered for more than 1,200 patients over the years 2018 to 2022. Recruitment and resource planning for the new radiation oncology centre was also supported through this funding.

In 2022, an additional 172 posts were created in cancer services and 2022, with recruitment ongoing for a further 198 posts.

Bernard Gloster, CEO, Health Service Executive (HSE) said:

"Implementation remains a challenge for many parts of the Health Service, and we can learn much from the approaches to cancer over many years. In the case of cancer services successive strategies have stood out in terms of effectiveness. This report on implementation is important in showing what has been achieved and the tasks that remain. In a post pandemic context, we need to build on the past achievements."

Prof. Risteárd Ó Laoide, Director of the HSE's National Cancer Control Programme, said:

"In 2022, more ground-breaking treatments were made available to cancer patients in Ireland. This includes CAR T-cell therapy provided in CHI Crumlin, which means certain patients will no longer have to travel abroad for these treatments. The continued implementation of the Strategy remains crucial to addressing the current and future needs of cancer patients. Recent investments in cancer services will deliver improved access and services to cancer patients, ensuring that patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time."

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## Notes

National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 Implementation Report 2022

(<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a89819-national-cancer-strategy-2017-2026/>).

Implementation of the National Cancer Strategy is a Programme for Government commitment and is part of the implementation of Sláintecare.

In 2022 the government allocated €35 million extra funding, which included €20 million for new development funding, and €15 million for new cancer drugs. Key developments in 2022 include:

- funding of €3.4 million supported increased patient attendances at Rapid Access Clinics (RACs) and improved performance against national Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This indicates strong recovery from the impact of COVID-19, with new RAC attendances in 2022 at 104% of 2019 levels
- an additional €3 million was allocated to support cancer surgeries from new development funding, ensuring a return to 2019 levels following disruption to these services in 2020 and 2021. Numbers of cancer surgeries surpassed 2019 levels with 16,226 cancer surgeries carried out in 2022 compared to 16,085 in 2019
- construction of a new €56 million radiation oncology facility at UHG was completed in 2022, with first patients to be seen in Q2 2023
- further capital projects for cancer services were continued under the Capital Plan for 2022. This included the equipment (linear accelerators) replacement programme for St Luke's Radiation Oncology Network, expansion of the oncology day unit at Cork University Hospital, and progression of the replacement of aseptic compounding units (ACUs) at Cork University Hospital and Tallaght University Hospital
- €5.3 million was allocated in support packages provided to mitigate against capacity challenges. This includes extending clinic times, providing additional clinics, increasing diagnostic capacity and providing locum/temporary support
- €3 million for systemic anti-cancer therapies included support for the introduction of paediatric CAR-T cell therapy, and the launch of the Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapy (chemotherapy, immunotherapy) Model of Care, which launched in June 2022
- €1.2 million supported the ongoing implementation of the Psycho-Oncology Model of Care. The Model of Care includes the establishment of psycho-oncology multidisciplinary teams (MDT) in all cancer centres, currently over 75% complete
- the 'Framework for the support and care of adolescents and young adults (AYA) with cancer in Ireland' was launched by the Minister for Health in May 2022. This framework will see a state-of-the-art AYA cancer care network delivered locally where possible, but centralised, when necessary, by providing separate facilities and specialist care teams in the new Children's Hospital and three of the eight adult-designated cancer centres, in St James' Hospital, Galway University Hospital and Cork University Hospital. €280,000 in 2022 supported the development of these specialist CAYA teams in designated centres
- €2.07 million was provided for enhancing radiotherapy services, including 25 additional staff and the continued rollout of new and innovative forms of radiotherapy

- over €200,000 was allocated for the continued rollout of the National Cancer Information System, which was rolled out to CHI Crumlin, University Hospital Kerry, Midlands Regional Hospital, Tullamore, and Letterkenny University Hospital in 2022. NCIS provides access to the patient's cancer treatment record, ensuring that all relevant healthcare providers will have access to the patient's data in an appropriate and timely manner. This allows national-level multidisciplinary teams to meet and share expertise, as with the National Adolescent and Young Adult Multidisciplinary Team
- preparatory works were done in 2022 to facilitate the introduction of Radiolabelled therapy, also called PRRT, in St Vincent's Hospital in 2023. Neuroendocrine tumour patients will be able to receive this treatment in Ireland for the first time from 2023. It is expected that 40 patients will be treated in 2023, increasing to 50-60 within five years
- the Women's Health Fund invested over €750,000 in 2022 on a suite of initiatives for cancer screening, including a first Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy campaign, the Laura Brennan HPV Vaccination Catch-up Programme portal, improving uptake of BowelScreen among marginalised women, listening and responding to women's experience of BreastCheck and research exploring the use of self-sampling in cervical screening
- over €20 million was committed for construction, fitout and staffing of the new National Cervical Screening Laboratory (NCSL) at the Coombe Hospital which began operating in December 2022
- BreastCheck eligibility was expanded to women aged 69 years in 2021 and three new additional mobile units became operational in 2022
- a trend report from the National Cancer Registry, published in September 2022, showed that the three cancer screening programmes (BowelScreen, BreastCheck, CervicalCheck) are effective, detecting cancers earlier and saving lives

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