

## News Release

**1st August 2023**

### **Response to campaign FOIs exposes five-year long agenda of downgrading South West Acute Hospital**

**Shocking statistics on allocation of "middle-grade" speciality doctors to Fermanagh shows the county has once again been de-railed.**

Health campaign, Save Our Acute Services (SOAS), have revealed that a response to an FOI raised by the group identified a shocking disparity in the allocation of middle grade doctors.

The group had written to request details of middle-grade speciality doctors being allocated to all hospitals, including South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) by the Northern Ireland Medical & Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA) over the last five years. The response obtained, which is now a public document, confirms a shocking inequality in allocations.

Over the last five years:

- in the school of Anaesthetics and ICU, SWAH received zero specialty doctors compared to 160 in Altnagelvin.
- The ratio for the school of Emergency Medicine was similar with SWAH receiving zero specialty doctors compared to 93 at Altnagelvin.
- In the school of medical diagnostics, SWAH received zero specialty doctors as against 44 for Altnagelvin.
- In Paediatrics, SWAH received two speciality doctors to Altnagelvin's 97
- In General Surgery the numbers were 25 for SWAH compared to 264 for Altnagelvin. This comparison of figures between SWAH and Altnagelvin reveals a shocking disparity – especially when we know that SWAH has performed 40% of all the surgeries in the Western Trust over the same five-year period.

Only in the schools of Medicine and Obstetrics & Gynae did SWAH receive slightly more significant numbers (37 and 17 respectively) but these were dwarfed by numbers going to Altnagelvin (194 and 116 respectively).

Overall SWAH received an average of 4 speciality doctors per 100 beds every six months. By comparison Altnagelvin received 21. Daisy Hill and Causeway hospitals - both of which are currently facing downgrading - received double the allocation given to SWAH - 8 and 7 in the same period respectively.

Campaign spokesperson Donal O'Cofaigh stated that the statistics confirmed a clear agenda had been at play over a period of at least five years to downgrade SWAH.

"These statistics are stark. They reveal that SWAH has been systematically undermined by NIMDTA in



conjunction with the Royal Colleges – including the Royal College of Surgeons. They completely shred any credibility for the excuses that the removal of urgent and emergency surgery from SWAH was driven by difficulties in recruitment. These are doctors being allocated by the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency and they have simply decided not to allocate them to SWAH over a five-year period.

"SWAH hasn't been allocated the middle grade doctors that our hospital needed. Middle-grade speciality doctors are essential for a hospital to function. By allocating them - there's a chance they may stay on. These speciality doctors fulfil a vital function by sharing the workload of Consultants the whole way through from Emergency Department to every specialism in our hospital.

"Our consultant surgical rota could not succeed with this lack of speciality doctors and their absence sends a clear signal of intent to run down our hospital.

"It is clear that Fermanagh has been de-railed once again. SWAH was built here in recognition of our geography - it is still needed. We cannot and will not accept second class status or second-class access for our families to basic NHS services."

## **ENDS...**

For further information or an interview with a campaign representative, contact Donal O'Cofaigh, SOAS spokesperson tel. 07375 530941.

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Notes:

Link to Freedom of Information request to NIMDTA:

[https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/nimmdta\\_assigned\\_training\\_posts#outgoing-1456000](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/nimmdta_assigned_training_posts#outgoing-1456000)

Source for Numbers of Beds in Hospitals:

DoH: Inpatient and Day Case Activity in Northern Ireland 2021/22

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/hospital-statistics-inpatient-and-day-case-activity-202122>

Next page details the analysis completed by SOAS

JPG Attachment of 'Speciality Doctors per 100 Beds per Term'

**Speciality Doctors - assignment in Northern Ireland - across the main Type 1 Hospitals  
Over the last 10 terms (5 years)**



Specialty Schools deliver postgraduate medical training in Northern Ireland. The schools are managed by the Northern Ireland Medical & Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA) in conjunction with the Royal Colleges, Faculties and Colleges.

Trainees who have accepted an offer from the Northern Ireland Deanery automatically become members of the school representing their speciality.

The main roles of the schools are:

- to ensure all education, training and assessment processes meet college and General Medical Council (GMC) curricula
- to monitor the quality of training, ensuring it enhances the standard of patient care and produces competent and capable specialists
- to implement new curricula in training programmes
- to encourage and develop educational research
- to promote diversity and equality of opportunity
- to work with the Northern Ireland Deanery to identify, assess and support trainees in difficulty

Hospital	Trust	# of Beds	Type 1 Acute?	Speciality Doctors by School:									Speciality Doctors TOTAL	Speciality Doctors per 100 Beds	Speciality Doctors per 100 Beds per annum	Speciality Doctors per 100 Beds per term
				School of Anaesthetics & ICU	Broad Based Training	School of Diagnostics	School of Emergency Medicine	School of Medicine	School of Obs & Gynae	School of Paediatrics	School of Surgery					
Altnagelvin Area Hospital	WH SCT	461	y	160	1	44	93	194	116	97	264	969	210	42	21	
Antrim Area Hospital	NH SCT	544	y	163	3	43	127	236	99	125	95	891	164	33	16	
Belfast City Hospital	BH SCT	302	y	133	6	70	28	763			178	1,178	390	78	39	
Causeway Hospital	NH SCT	233	y		4		2	63	22		67	158	68	14	7	
Craigavon Area Hospital	SH SCT	491	y	168	1	59	156	226	97	98	171	976	199	40	20	
Daisy Hill Hospital	SH SCT	221	y		1		12	85	26	13	39	176	80	16	8	
RVH (incl Maternity & Childrens)	BH SCT	997	y	486	6	289	225	618	218	619	673	3,134	314	63	31	
South West Acute Hospital	WH SCT	218	y		1			37	17	2	25	82	38	8	4	
Ulster Hospital	SEH SCT	650	y	188	5	69	125	324	92	96	253	1,152	177	35	18	

**Notes:**

1. NIMDTA allocates trainees in February & August each year
2. Data relates to allocations between August 2018 and February 2023 (last 5 years)
3. FY1 and FY2 allocations handled separately and not included here
4. School of Psychiatry allocations not included here
5. Calculating allocations 'per 100 Beds' enables easy comparison across hospitals

**Sources of data:-**

NIMDTA allocations:

[https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/nimdt\\_assigned\\_training\\_posts#outgoing-1456000](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/nimdt_assigned_training_posts#outgoing-1456000)

Number of Beds per Hospital:

NISRA: Inpatient and Day Case Activity in Northern Ireland 2021/22

