

COMMUNITY VOICE

MARCH 2010

ISSUE No. 152

DUBLIN 15's ONLY **FREE!** NEWSPAPER

Hospital budgets slashed

Budget cuts announced by the Health Service Executive (HSE) for Connolly Hospital will lead to significant cuts in hospital services for local residents. The HSE recently announced a cut of over €13m in the money available to the hospital for 2010.

In 2008 the hospital had an annual budget of €106.8m and last year that was cut to €103.6m. However it is now understood that this year's cuts will see the amount of money available for the Dublin 15 hospital slashed to €90m.

Last year's cutbacks were generally absorbed by hospital management through the implementation of a cost centre plan agreed with staff. According to hospital manager, Shay Smyth, "I must give credit to all the staff for their efforts last year

as we still managed to come in within our reduced budget and still maintained services."

However Mr. Smyth conceded that "2010 will present a much more challenging environment for the hospital with our budget reduced to this extent."

Community Voice understands that discussions between the hospital and the HSE are ongoing and it is expected that the final figure for 2010 will be of the order of €91m.

Mr. Smyth points out that this figure includes cost reductions of €5.5m due to a reduction in pay costs as a result of the Government's budget decisions on public service pay last year. "However we still have savings of €7m to find. We are being presented with an effective cut of between 5% and 6% and there is no way we can maintain our services with a cut in our budget of this magnitude," he said.

According to Mr. Smyth, "this level of the cuts has to impact on the services the hospital provides. We are in detailed discussions at present on how we will provide services in the coming year. These cuts have been provided nationally to the budgets of all hospitals. However a 5% cut for

us is far more damaging than for a bigger hospital which can absorb this level of cut."

It is likely that the reduced funding for the hospital will now lead to a significant reduction in services. These are likely to include a curtailment of activity in the outpatient department; the closure of inpatient beds and a reduction in the levels of elective surgery.

Community Voice understands that there may also be some cuts made to the A&E services at the hospital. These have shown a drop in the past couple of years. In 2008, 35,000 patients presented at the A&E department and this fell to 32,000 last year with the trend continuing to decline. This may also present some cost saving opportunities to the hospital.

One area previously highlighted was the so-called issue of "bed blocking." It is hoped that this may also be addressed in the coming months. "We are currently working with our community colleagues," said Mr. Smyth "and under the new fair deal legislation we are hoping to get some movement on delayed discharges from the hospital."



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Members of the Russian community at the recent Russian Family Day in Huntstown Community Centre (see page 5) Photo Vincent Cahill

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