

Press Release - April 24th

Closure of St Brigid's Ward in Loughlinstown Hospital completely unacceptable.

The People Before Profit Alliance (PBPA) learnt yesterday of plans to close **St. Brigid's Ward in St Columcilles' Hospital in Loughlinstown**. This move by the HSE is a direct result of cuts in the department of health stemming from last October's Budget.

St Brigid's Ward is a general ward in the hospital and its closure will mean the loss of at least 18 beds.

Other recent cuts in St Columcille's that have come to the attention of PBPA include the loss of two dentists (one full time and one part-time) and dental nurses from the Orthodontics unit. This has led to a huge increase in waiting times for young people seeking important dental treatment.

Hugh Lewis, People Before Profit Alliance (PBPA) Representative in the Ballybrack ward, says: "The closure of St Brigid's ward is completely unacceptable. It is an utter disgrace that our health service, which is already in a shambles, is being forced to make further cuts. In an economic crisis a decent public health service is needed more than ever. The money that is being used to bail out the banks should instead be used to fund vital services, in particular, the health service. Once again it is the most vulnerable in society that have to shoulder the burden of our economic crisis. PBPA will immediately be organising public meetings to discuss how we can stop this closure."

The recent budget included an increase in the health levy that all PAYE workers already pay. This increase is grossly unfair because it once again forces ordinary people to make up the shortfall in public finances. It also now seems that an extra health levy is going to make no difference to cuts in the health service.

Richard Boyd Barrett, PBPA representative in Dun Laoghaire ward, says: "These cuts at Loughlinstown demonstrate the front-line impact of the government's disgraceful budget cut-backs. Brigid's ward was a mixed ward that had young and old alike in it. Where will these people go in future? The cuts in the Orthodontics unit are again a nasty cut hitting mostly young teenagers. The old, the vulnerable and the young are being made to suffer as a result of the greed of bankers and developers and a government that wishes to protect them at all costs. Only public outrage and protest can reverse these cuts. 2 years ago there were moves by developers to get hold of St Michael's Hospital in Dun Laoghaire to shut it down and build apartments. Thanks to the thousands of people that signed our petitions and got on the streets to protest, we managed to save the hospital. We need to do the same for Loughlinstown. There is no need for this closure - there is more than enough money still in this country. The super-rich are still being allowed to avail of tax havens and there has been no serious attempt to levy their wealth. Billions are now to be poured into bailing out the banks when it should be spent on maintaining services and jobs."

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