

# Department of Health Policy Review: Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATUs)

## Summary

### SATUs IN NUMBERS:

<b>1985</b>	First SATU in Europe opens in Rotunda Hospital
<b>6</b>	Units located in Cork, Dublin, Galway, Mullingar, Letterkenny, Waterford
<b>941</b>	Men, women and adolescents visited a SATU in 2018
<b>1 in 10</b>	SATU patients are men*
<b>1 in 2</b>	SATU patients are under 25* (38% are students)
<b>1 in 10</b>	SATU patients are between the ages of 14 and 18*
<b>1 in 2</b>	Alleged perpetrators are strangers/recent acquaintances (last 24 hours)
<b>6 in 10</b>	Attend SATU with the Gardaí
<b>586</b>	SATU patients reported a rape or sexual assault to an Gardaí in 2018 (62%)
<b>11%</b>	Average annual increase in presentations to SATU since 2014
<b>6</b>	Full time forensic examiners nationally

*\*2017 figures used (all other figures are from 2018)*

### What is the SATU Policy Review?

- SATUs support adults and adolescents who are the victims of rape or sexual assault.
- There is huge pride in the SATU service delivered to patients in Ireland.
- However, SATU services are also seriously under pressure and demand for the service is increasing.
- The Review looked at these issues to understand “how well current policy is working in practice?”
- It found areas of excellence but also areas needing improvement, and in some cases urgent action.
- The team identified 10 practical and specific actions which can be implemented now to create a more sustainable service for the patients that depend on it and the staff that deliver it.
- The Minister for Health has approved all actions and committed 0.5 million this year
- The Minister has identified a senior accountable manager in the HSE and directed the Department to drive rapid implementation starting March 2019.

### What will change this year?

- Investment in SATU services will increase by 0.5 million this year.
- The number of forensic nurse examiners will increase from 6 to 15 and the numbers of forensic medical examiners will also increase by funding 2 additional training programmes.
- For the first-time ‘rapid responder’ forensic examiners will be able to travel to patients in their local unit if there are staff shortages.
- Small but significant improvements will be made to the look and feel of each unit so that patient’s experience a brighter, friendlier, more functional space.
- A small number of senior decision makers will be appointed to drive these improvements.

### What do we hope to achieve?

That SATUs become a hub for patients who are victims of sexual assault to access holistic ‘whole person’ support.



### **What will change next year?**

- Next year we plan to increase investment in SATU by a further 0.25 million to 0.8 million in additional investment.
- Next year the scope of the service will expand so that patients have the option for liaison support after their visit to SATU
- Next year will be the first calendar year where the SATU Network is officially up and running – formally linking all units together to provide a consistent national service to patients with a fully functioning national governance and accountability structure

### **What will Change in the next 3 years?**

- In 3 years the SATU service will provide an expanded service offering medium-term supports for every patient that attends there.
- In 3 years, the SATU service will judge its performance by analysing patient quality and patient experience, utilising all of the data and information available to continuously improve.
- In 3 years, SATUs will have a sustainable staff resource that is innovative in how it uses capacity and anticipated “down-time” to respond to patient needs, support prevention and develop the service

### **What will change in the next ten years?**

In the next ten years the National SATU Network will, in partnership with other sectors and services, make important choices about:

- how to provide additional supports for at-risk groups;
- how to move to purpose-built units and where to locate these;
- if it's better to develop a smaller number of centres of excellence – like other jurisdictions;
- if it's better to develop units that have the capability to support adult, adolescent and child patients; and
- if it's better to co-locate units with Gardaí and social services – like the Barnahaus pilot in Galway;

## **KEY FINDINGS**

### **The Policy Review is satisfied with:**

- The hard wired emphasis on patient choice and consent
- The positive patient perspective and experience of SATU
- The extraordinary commitment and dedication of SATU staff in very challenging contexts
- Retaining the service in an acute (as opposed to community) setting
- Retaining the nurse-led model but within a blended team
- The levels of inter-agency cooperation
- The demonstrable focus on continuous service improvement

### **The Policy Review has identified a need to:**

- Increase resourcing to ensure a sustainable service into the future
- Introduce more holistic, whole-person care for patients over the longer-term
- Enhance patient experience and service setting
- Improve national decision making to reduce local variation of services
- Strengthen accountability and quality assurance
- Increase staff supports to resolve systemic under-management

### **If you have been affected by any of the issues highlighted in the Review:**

Support is available from the Rape Crisis Centres National 24-hour helpline every day of the year on 1800778888. This phone line offers a free, confidential listening and support service for women and men who have been raped, sexually assaulted, sexually harassed or sexually abused at any time in their lives.

Further information on free of charge services provided through the Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATUs) in Dublin, Mullingar, Galway, Waterford, Cork and Donegal is available through [www.hse.ie/satu](http://www.hse.ie/satu)