

Cork hospital management reviews admissions policy after sexual assault

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Management at a Cork hospital, criticised by a judge for their admission policy after a teenage girl was assaulted in a room by a male patient, have confirmed that they have carried out a review of their admission of patients.

Judge Seán Ó Donnabháin said questions had to be asked of Cork University Hospital (CUH) management over their admissions policy after hearing how patient Andrew O'Donovan sexually assaulted a 17- year-old girl in a CUH ward.

“This is a very, very troubling case where you have two patients presenting to Cork University Hospital and were placed side by side in a mixed ward and one sexually assaulted the other in the late night, early morning.

“You have to question the management of the ward system that allowed this young girl to be placed in close proximity to a man who was known to have a history of schizophrenic tendencies and a long psychiatric history.”

Judge Ó Donnabháin made his comments after Andrew O'Donovan from Butlersgift, Drimoleague, Co Cork had pleaded guilty at Cork Circuit Criminal Court to sexually assaulting the teenage girl in CUH on May 14th, 2018.

But now in the wake of Judge Ó Donnabháin's comments, the HSE Hospital Group South issued a statement, confirming that a review of the admissions policy was carried out after the incident.

“Management at Cork University Hospital have noted the comments of Judge Seán Ó Donnabháin and wish to advise that following this incident a review of protocols for the admission of patients to hospital wards was undertaken.

“Factors such as accommodation, staffing and patient safety were examined as part of this review process,” said the HSE in the statement which also saw the hospital criticised by campaigners against sexual violence.

The teenager told the court in her Victim Impact Statement how she had suffered an accident which left her completely immobilised but she thought she was safe in hospital and never imagined she would be in danger there.

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The girl, who said she saw no remorse in Andrew O’Donovan when he appeared in court, said she hoped the age for teenagers to be treated as paediatric patients would be raised from 16 to 18 as a result of “this horrible situation”.

Judge Ó Donnabháin said Andrew O’Donovan presented a sentencing problem given his psychiatric history, but he noted his guilty plea was of benefit to the victim in that it was a public acknowledgment that he was guilty and she was innocent.

He also noted that O’Donovan had spared his victim the trauma of having to give evidence by pleaded guilty and, taking account of his lack of previous convictions, he sentenced him to 18 months but suspended it in its entirety.