

**12<sup>TH</sup> September 2018**

**'WE KNOW BEST' ATTITUDES MUST BE CHALLENGED IN HEALTH SERVICES  
- PATIENT ADVOCACY KEY TO CULTURE CHANGE**

“At the heart of the cervical cancer controversy and of the subsequent report by Prof Gabriel Scally is the issue of non-disclosure and at the heart of non-disclosure lies a disregard for the rights and dignity of patients” says Mervyn Taylor, Executive Director of Sage Advocacy.

“The development of patient advocacy is key to changing the culture of disregard that can set in when professionals’ attitudes and approaches are allowed go unchallenged. It is worth remembering on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 that a report by HIQA into issues in Portlaoise Hospital was published on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015. The very first recommendation of that report was that the Department of Health should commence discussions with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to establish an independent patient advocacy service, with a view to having a service in place by May 2016. The Department of Health is still struggling to achieve something in this area while the direct allocation for patient advocacy in 2018 is a mere €216,000” said Taylor.

There are two substantive Issues which needed to be addressed in the scoping exercise of Prof Scally. The first was the integrity of the screening programme and the oversight of quality and safety. The second, which is of foremost concern to those impacted by the cervical screening programme scandal, was that no information was shared with the women for whom the service exists.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 the patient advocacy services previously provided by Patient Focus transferred to Sage Advocacy. There is now an urgent need to build on the considerable experience gained in working with patients and families of previous scandals and to adequately fund the development of independent patient advocacy services so that the culture of disregard and non-disclosure can be effectively challenged and the implementation of the recommendations of Prof Scally’s report can be independently monitored.

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## Note to Editors

The HIQA report on Portlaoise can be accessed at <https://www.higa.ie/system/files/Portlaoise-Investigation-Report.pdf>

Recommendation 1 stated: “The Department of Health should commence discussions with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to establish an independent patient advocacy service, with a view to having a service in place by May 2016”. This service’s role would be to ensure that patients’ reported experiences are recorded, listened to and learned from. Such learning needs to be shared between hospitals within hospital groups; between hospital groups; nationally throughout the wider health system; and published. In the interim, the Department of Health and the HSE should provide regular updates on their websites to inform the public on the progress of establishing this service”.

Further information on Sage Advocacy is available at [www.sageadvocacy.ie](http://www.sageadvocacy.ie)

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