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NEW FAMILY ROOM AND EDUCATION BURSARY IN SUSIE LONG'S MEMORY

New five-year agreement to enhance end-of-life care on 16th anniversary of Susie Long's death.

A new family room and an education bursary for staff in St Luke's General Hospital Kilkenny are some of the new measures being funded by a local charity on the 16th anniversary of Susie Long's death. The Susie Long Hospice Fund (SLHF) has entered a new five-year agreement with St Luke's General Hospital Kilkenny to substantially improve end-of-life care for all patients including palliative care patients.

The SLHF began with a mission to provide the highest possible quality end-of-life care for patients and their families through the establishment of a 12-bed hospice in Kilkenny. Since the charity's inception, there was a huge emphasis on the need for privacy and dignity for all patients during end-of-life care. This need has been fulfilled as all new hospital rooms in St Luke's are single occupancy and have transformed the experience of end-of-life care patients and their families.

A voluntary committee chaired by the late Susie Long's husband, Conor Mac Liam, announced details of the new agreement with St Luke's General Hospital on the 16th anniversary of Susie's death. The measures agreed which the Susie Long Hospice Fund will provide funding for will include the following:

- The building and reconfiguration of a **new family room** to provide comfort to relatives of end-of-life patients in St Luke's.
- The purchase of **three state-of-the-art Murphy beds, six Buddy chairs and room enhancements** in the 72-bed Ormond wing of the hospital so that relatives can be by the bedsides of their loved ones.
- An **education fund** to cover European Certification in Palliative Care for six staff members of St Luke's General Hospital and one postgraduate diploma in palliative care every year.
- Provision of **complementary therapies** for end-of-life patients.

Commenting on the announcement, Conor Mac Liam said the hospice was due for completion by 2013 according to HSE plans but was shelved due to a lack of HSE funding.

"We have campaigned tirelessly to provide a better service for the people of Carlow and Kilkenny and their families. I am very proud of the new measures agreed, in particular, the education bursary which will have a long-lasting impact on palliative care services in the south-east."

Mr Mac Liam said the SLHF is also exploring how they can help children with life limiting conditions in the south-east who need palliative care. He said the work of the hospice fund is around closing the gap where there is a need for additional supports for palliative care patients and their families.

He said:

“If we can make life easier for families that are already going through the most difficult time of their lives, that is what we will do. Our family knows the importance of having these extra supports as we had to travel 140km to be with Susie in her final moments. We’re working closely with the End Of Life Care Coordinator, Margaret Ryan, at St Luke’s General Hospital to ensure we constantly build on the hospice friendly hospital movement and alleviate the suffering of families who want to spend precious time with loved ones”.

In response to the new agreement, St Luke’s General Hospital General Manager Niamh Lacey:

“The Hospital Management wish to acknowledge and thank the Trustees of the Susie Long Hospice Fund for their continued support and enhanced relationship in achieving the best outcomes for our patients within a holistic and caring environment. St Luke’s General Hospital is working collaboratively with the Susie Long Hospice Fund to build rapport with patients, family care givers and hospital staff.

“Together, we will ensure the best end of life care, from advocacy and education, the importance of dying well and allowing our patients to die with dignity and the support of family members. As a Hospice Friendly Hospital, the support we have received from the Susie Long Hospice Fund will greatly enhance the end-of-life care experienced by patients and their families.”

