

HARVEY DROPPED BY STATE



Scared . . . Stephen with son at home



Waiting years for op . . . Harvey with his father

What we want is a public inquiry

—DAD STEPHEN

Those kids need surgery now . . .

—MICHEAL MARTIN

By ADAM HIGGINS

THE dad of Harvey Sherratt — who was removed from the scoliosis surgery wait list without his parents' knowledge — has slammed the Tanaiste's call for an apology for his family.

Micheal Martin yesterday said he was shocked to hear a child had been removed from a surgery wait list without his parents being told, as dad Stephen revealed: "I'm scared Harvey is going to die."

Harvey is one of hundreds of kids waiting for spinal surgeries for conditions including scoliosis and spina bifida.

The eight-year-old's case has been previously raised in the Dail as his parents fight for help with their little boy struggling to breathe as his condition worsens.

At the weekend, Harvey's parents Stephen and Gillian revealed that their son has been removed from the surgery waiting list without their knowledge.

Speaking at the Fianna Fail think-in event in Dublin yesterday, Tanaiste Micheal Martin branded the decision "shocking".

Taoiseach Simon Harris and Health Minister Stephen Donnelly have previously confessed that children have been failed, as their conditions grew worse on the lengthy surgery wait list.

The Irish Sun put it to the Fianna Fail leader that Harvey's case shows children are still being failed by our health service.

In response, the Tanaiste said: "Those children need surgery now. It is shocking that any child would be taken off a list like that without any communication with parents — that simply should not happen. It's not good enough."

"The authorities and the hospital authorities in particular need to apologise to that family and arrange a surgery."

But Harvey's furious father Stephen today says there is no point in his family getting an empty apology, as he pleads: "I want to see my son getting the surgery that he's waited years for. I want it to be finished."

He added: "It means nothing unless there is action taken. It means absolutely nothing."

"What have we seen so far? It's been scandal after scandal after scandal and nothing is being done."

"If there are meaningful apologies and they really want to do something, they should launch a public inquiry."

"That's what we want. I have serious questions around how Harvey has been treated. I can only imagine how others have been treated."

Harvey was previously in the care of Dr Connor Green who recommended surgery in 2022.

But the surgeon has been on leave since last

year, following investigations into the use of springs that were not approved for medical use.

Professor Damian McCormack, the head of paediatric orthopaedic surgery at Temple Street Hospital, publicly defended Mr Green and called for his reinstatement at the hospital.

Harvey moved to a new surgeon who disagreed with Dr Green and recommended the youngster be fitted with a body cast until he felt he was more suitable for surgery. How-

ever, a UK consultant hired to provide kids with second opinions advised that Harvey should have surgery immediately — a recommendation that was also backed up by another Irish surgeon.

After all this, Harvey's parents were shocked to find out, by chance, that Harvey had been removed from the surgery wait list.

The family only became aware Harvey was not on the list when all other families waiting for surgery received letters from Children's Health Ireland updating them on the service.

Harvey's dad told The Irish Sun he is terrified he will lose his son as his condition continues to get

worse while he waits for care. Stephen said: "To be honest, I'm scared that Harvey is going to die. I really am."

"I genuinely feel that every time he goes into hospital and I see him struggling for breath and his chest is rising and his heart rate is shooting through the roof — he's been up at 200 beats per minute — and they are pumping steroids into him."

"There are times where I have genuinely sat there and thought to myself, 'How am I going to tell Gillian that our son has passed away?' How am I going to be able to do that?"

"I travel in with him and I'm

like, 'How am I going to be able to tell her that her first born son has died because he couldn't get a f***ing surgery?'"

"I could have sued the State millions of times but I'm not interested in money, I just want a happy and healthy kid. I want my family to be looked after."

Stephen believes that one of the key issues in CHI is the lack of communication with families about their children's care.

He said: "Communication is so poor. Any time you try to communicate with them, you are evaded. You have to be the manager of your child's care. You have to get departments to communicate."



O'FEARGHAIL SLAMS BICYCLE RACK SPEND

LESSONS will be learned from the “exorbitant” cost of the infamous bike shed at Leinster House, the Ceann Comhairle has said.

Seán O’Fearghail said “it’s a profound embarrassment” that a glass, granite and steel shelter for 18 bikes cost €336,000. The glass covering, located on the grounds of Leinster House, has been the subject of criticism and ridicule for its high cost. A breakdown from the Office of Public Works shows almost €284,000 was spent on construction and installation, almost €4,000 on archaeological services, and more than €10,000 on contract administration services.

The chairman of the OPW, who is the landlord of Leinster House and other historic buildings, is preparing a report on the bike shed project for Minister of State Kieran O’Donnell.

Mr O’Fearghail said he was calling for the head of the OPW to attend the Cost row . . . O’Fearghail

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission meeting next week to answer questions about how the project came into being. He said: “Specifically, it is important to find out why the value for money of the project wasn’t queried when the cost became clear to the OPW. “I know I speak for everyone at this house that it is a profound embarrassment, and the depth of public anger is entirely justified.”

Mr O’Fearghail added: “So whatever the findings of the OPW review, lessons must and will be learned.”



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SICK CHILD HARVEY STILL WAITING ON OP

Harris' words are just a slap in the face

PARENTS ON DAIL ROW

Si to meet groups

By ADAM HIGGINS

The Taoiseach has finally agreed to meet with advocacy groups who have been fighting for families with children on the lengthy surgery waiting lists in Ireland.

The Irish Sun's Kids Can't Wait campaign has pressed the Taoiseach for months to meet with advocacy groups run by parents with children on the waiting lists.

And on Tuesday night, ahead of the first day of the new Dail term, the Taoiseach revealed he had finally written to these advocacy groups to arrange a date to meet with them. He told the Dail: "My office has been in contact with advocacy groups and I expect to meet them shortly."

"It will not just be a meeting with me — it will be a meeting with the new clinical lead for spinal surgery, the Minister for Health and the head of the HSE."

The meeting takes place in Government buildings on October 7.

Furious . . . parents Stephen and Gillian

Waiting list . . . Harvey with his dad and, top right, in agony

By ADAM HIGGINS

THE mother of little Harvey Sherratt has slammed the Taoiseach's remarks about their son's care as "a slap in the face".

Gillian Sherratt's comments come after the eight-year-old's heartbreaking wait for scoliosis surgery was raised in the Dail. Harvey waited in pain for two-and-a-half years for spinal surgery, before he was removed from the wait list without his parents being informed.

The Irish Sun's Kids Can't Wait campaign has been demanding action from the Government to tackle the waiting list for children's surgeries, with the latest figures from July showing there are 287 kids waiting for spinal operations.

On the first day of the new Dail term yesterday, Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald raised Harvey's case with the Taoiseach, as she blasted: "There are too many children in this awful situation. The opposition leader continued: "In 2017, when Harvey was just one year old, his parents were told that his ribs were crushing his lungs. "In that same year, as he became Minister, the Taoiseach promised that no child with scoliosis would wait four months for his or her operation — but he broke that promise and children waited and waited. "Harvey has waited and waited, and his condition has become life-threatening."

The Dail heard that the curve in Harvey's spine has gone from 65 degrees to 110 degrees. It is now twisting his rib cage against his heart and lungs, making it hard for him to breathe.

Over just three months last year, Harvey was rushed to hospital on five occasions, including once on Christmas Day.

McDonald said that Harvey's mum Gillian has sent videos of her son struggling to breathe to the Taoiseach but had not received any reply until Tuesday night — with his case due to be raised in the Dail the following morning.

In the letter, the Taoiseach said his team were willing to help. In response to McDonald's Heavily criticised . . . Harris

queries about Harvey, Simon Harris told the Dail: "Politicians do not order operations."

He said that doctors must decide when it is safe to operate, but he has contacted the CEO of the HSE about the case and wants a new appointment made for Harvey to look at the next steps in his care.

The Taoiseach said: "I very much regret that children can experience long waiting times for treatment. "I am conscious of the burden that this places on them and their families. "I am very conscious, as a parent, of how any of us would do anything and go to the ends of the earth if our child needed any sort of treatment or care. Yes, when I was Minister for Health, I met with the families of children awaiting scoliosis procedures on many occasions. I remember them. "I remember their names and their faces. I understand some of what they are going through, but none of us can fully imagine that anxiety, pain and worry. "We must do everything we can to help them. I assure Deputy McDonald that this Government will, and is, doing everything it can to help them."

The Taoiseach highlighted that a new taskforce has been put in place on the issue, €1.34m has been used to hire staff for a dedicated spinal team, and more than 300 operations have happened this year.

In response to this, McDonald pointed to Harvey Sherratt's parents in the Dail public gallery and fumed: "They should not be here. "The fact that parents of children with scoliosis and spina bifida have to come to the Dail is a testament to the system's failure because their child is running out of time."

Speaking to The Irish Sun after the Dail debate on their son's case, Harvey's parents said they are furious with the Taoiseach's comments and said they just want their son to get the care he deserves.

Mum Gillian said: "It is a slap in the face. He had nothing new to add. He had no more actual talk of progress and we haven't seen things get better. "He can tell us that the numbers have come down but, at the same time, when we know that kids are being kicked off the list without being given a heads-up, is that why the numbers are coming down? "I know he's not a clinician. He can't tell us that Harvey's fit for surgery or that Harvey can get his surgery tomorrow. But he can still make promises that he will do what he needs to do to ensure that CHI fix this as a collective issue. "There was no talk about him bringing out the audit on the €19million. There's no talk of him trying to figure out why our kids didn't get the funding that they were supposed to get originally. "It felt like he went in there and he had his little notes prepared and he didn't listen to what was actually being brought to him. "It was his own PR spin of what he wanted to say, without actually saying anything."

Frustrated . . . Harvey's folks with Irish Sun's Adam

He had no more actual talk of progress — GILLIAN SHERRATT

KIDS CAN'T WAIT