

THE IRISH SUN

Thursday, July 4, 2024

BEST VALUE IN IRELAND

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thesun.ie

By GARY MENEELY

A MUM and daughter are resting "in the arms of the angels" following their deaths in a horror road crash, pals said.

Eight-year-old Abbigael and Aisling Moore, 46, lost their lives after a collision with a lorry on the N26 in Foxford, Co Mayo, on Tuesday night.

Parents at Abbigael's school said: "Aisling was so devoted and proud of Abbigael. You'd never see one without the other."

Full Story — Page Five

Tragic...
Abbigael
and devoted
mum Aisling



MUM AND DAUGHTER KILLED IN HORROR CRASH

Resting in the arms of angels



2 SPORTS PULLOUTS FREE INSIDE

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SCANDAL

Donnelly ordered CHI to spend EVERY cent of a €19m fund on ops for kids suffering from scoliosis, yet they DIDN'T do as they were told..

MISSPENT YOUTH

By ADAM HIGGINS

CHILDREN'S Health Ireland chiefs spent most of the €19million given to them to end scoliosis surgery waiting lists elsewhere.

Health Minister Stephen Donnelly said it was "deeply frustrating" to discover the cash was misused.

Senator Michael McDowell called it "a bit of a scandal" and last night insisted: "Heads must roll."

Our Kids Can't Wait campaign demands action to end wait lists.

Full Story — Page Four



Frustrated...
Health
Minister
Donnelly



€19M OP SCANDAL

CHI didn't spend cash on scoliosis kids despite order



MOST of a €19million pot meant to cut scoliosis op waiting lists for kids was spent on something else.

Health Minister Stephen Donnelly last night made the revelation. He told the Furious... Health Minister Donnelly



By ADAM HIGGINS

Seanad it was “deeply frustrating” Children’s Health Ireland chiefs used the cash “far more broadly”. Senator Michael McDowell insisted “heads must roll” at CHI as a result and raged: “This is a bit of a scandal.” Hospital bosses had pledged back in 2022 to eradicate surgery wait lists with the funding. They were given the €19million after promising the Minister it

would allow them to ensure no kid would have to wait more than four months for spinal ops. Two years on, CHI have failed. And there are currently 246 on waiting lists for scoliosis surgery. Parent advocacy groups raised concerns the €19million was not all spent on improving spinal services prompting a HSE audit. And Minister Donnelly, who is still awaiting a final report, said “it is clear to me from initial discussions that the majority of that funding, intended for spinal

services, was allocated far more broadly across CHI”. The Minister said the dough was used to hire extra staff in other areas and to fund a new operating theatre and MRI facility. But Senator McDowell said “something went very, very badly wrong”, adding: “If I were the Minister – and thank God I’m not at the moment – I would demand accountability.” Our Kids Can’t Wait campaign demands an end to waiting lists. adam.higgins@the-sun.ie

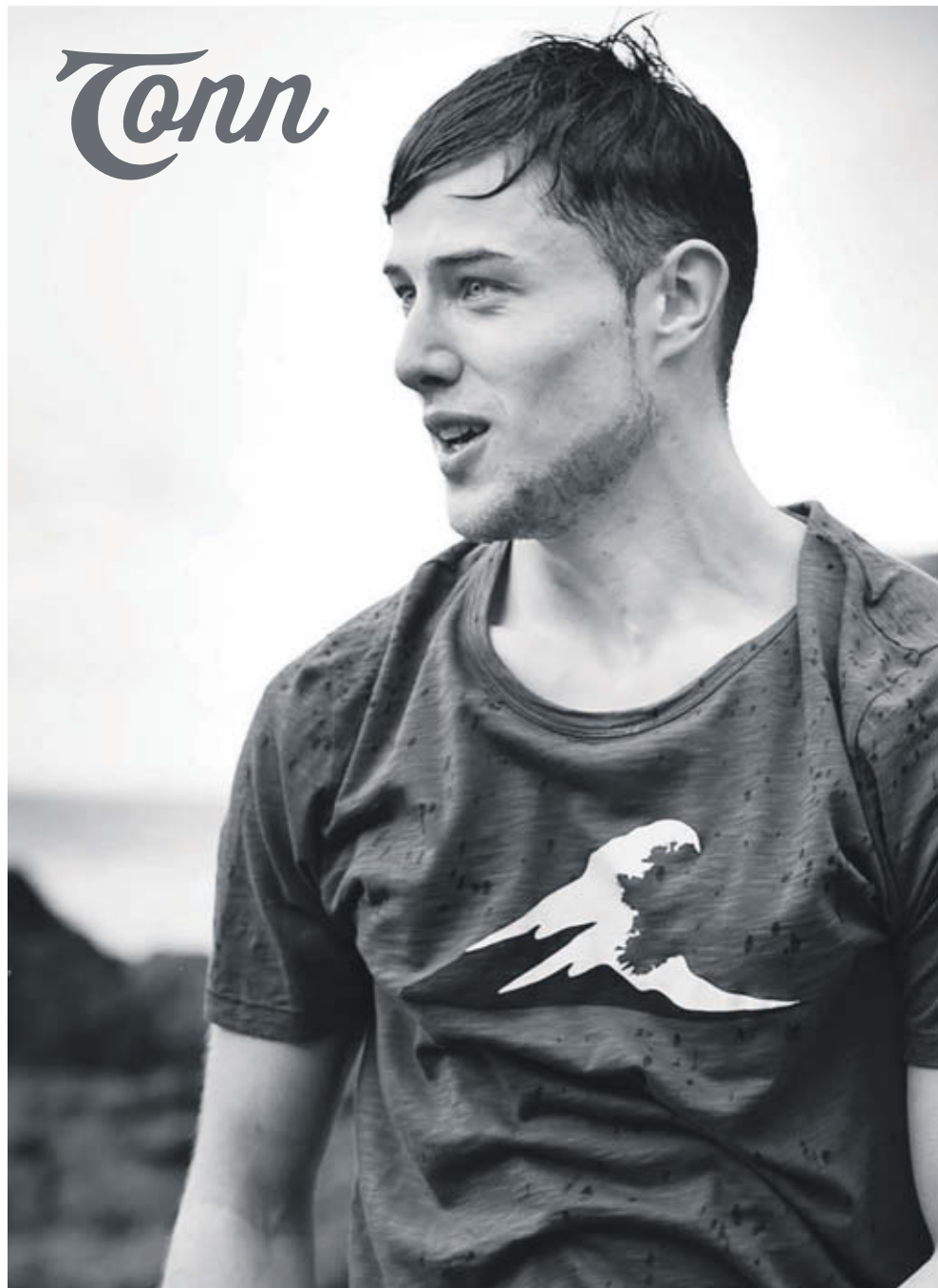


Had a blast... Kelce

Tay’s fella struggled with Irish accent

By NICOLA BARDON

TAYLOR Swift’s fella Travis Kelce has revealed he didn’t understand the Irish accent while here. The American football star, 34, jetted in to see Tay Tay, also 34, play her third and final gig at Dublin’s Aviva Stadium. And Travis said his time in Ireland was “an absolute blast”. He told his podcast: “Ireland was fun. They showed us a good time. But once you get off the plane, they have the thickest f****g accents I’ve ever heard in my life.” After the show, Taylor and Travis and their celeb pals hit Hacienda Bar, near Smithfield. He explained: “Got to have some Guinness on draft over there, basically just beer, milkshakes, delicious. And then I had my new favourite dessert shot, a Baby Guinness.” He also said it was “awesome” to meet Julia Roberts and Stevie Nicks at the Eras Tour show.



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GRAND DESIGNS

By MICHAEL DOYLE

IT hasn't been the warmest summer, but Brown Thomas has you covered. The Emerald and Wax printed Kimono coat, the Kindred red dress with headpiece by Ailish McElroy, as well as, right, the Rashiid coat, hat and bag — all made of faux fur — were among the picks of CREATE 2024. This champions 26 up-and-coming Irish designers, with their offerings now on sale.



Campaign... Dearbhla

2-in-3 like a weekly boozing session

By EMMA MOONEY

NEARLY two-thirds of Irish people say they drink at least once a week, a new study shows. Research also found 56 per cent of boozers have gone binge drinking in the past month. For Alcohol Awareness Week, charity Drinkaware has launched their new campaign — Know the Low — to raise awareness of the country’s low-risk alcohol guidelines. They state six drinks or more is considered binge drinking — and that punters should have at least two days a week without booze. CEO Dearbhla O’Brien said: “Knowledge is power, and we see this campaign as an essential starting point in supporting the public to reduce and monitor their alcohol consumption. “The low-risk weekly guidelines are an obvious starting point in tackling this harmful pattern.”

SHOT SOLDIER TO GET IRISH INQUEST

AN Irish inquest into the death of Private Sean Rooney is set to be held following the completion of a Garda investigation.

By JOHN KIERANS

The family of the soldier who was killed in Lebanon have been informed of the probe, which was carried out in order to prepare a report on the case for the Coroner. Tanaiste and Defence Minister Micheal Martin has now confirmed

An Irish inquest into his death will now be held. The Dundalk-based soldier, 24, lost his life and a colleague was seriously injured when their UN convoy was attacked in south Lebanon by armed militia linked to Hezbollah in 2022.

A number of men were arrested by the Lebanese authorities over the shooting. They were due to appear

Tragic death... Rooney



in court on June 7 but none of them appeared in person.

And Mr Martin told Louth TD Ruairi O Murchu in the Dail: "I was very disappointed to learn at the recent hearing that once again none of those indicted for the killing of Private Sean Rooney appeared in court."

"I'm determined that no stone is left unturned to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice."

The next hearing in the case is scheduled to be held in February 2025.

FURY AS WE REVEAL C.H.I MISSPENT €19M



Angry... Amanda Coughlan, Una Keightley and Claire Cahill

EXCLUSIVE by ADAM HIGGINS
Political Correspondent

FURIOUS parents have demanded "incompetent" health chiefs resign over their failure to spend €19million on kids' spinal surgery waiting lists.

Families were stunned when Health Minister Stephen Donnelly told the Seanad on Wednesday that funds he had allocated to Children's Health Ireland in 2022 for scoliosis ops had been misspent.

Angela Briggs - whose daughter Tyra suffers from scoliosis and hip dysplasia and is awaiting surgery told The Irish Sun: "This proves to me that there is no accountability in the HSE and CHI.

"That was money allocated to our most vulnerable children to sort out the waiting times and children's surgeries. How can anyone have the gall to go and spend that money elsewhere not be held accountable for their actions."

And Claire Cahill, of the Scoliosis Advocacy Network, called for the board of CHI to step down.

She told The Irish Sun: "Minister Donnelly's failure to oversee the spending of €19million has harmed our children.

"The CHI board must step down, having proven incompetent. Parents and children demand answers now, as we still await an audit report months later.

Politicians yesterday demanded that the Health Minister face a Dail grilling over his handling of the CHI spending controversy.

It follows accusations that Donnelly was aware of concerns about misspending **TWO YEARS AGO.**

In 2022, bosses at CHI told the Health Minister that they could ensure that no child would wait for scoliosis surgery for more than four months if they got appropriate funding.

And on the back of this promise, Donnelly allocated €19million to pay for these improvements to the spinal and orthopaedic services.

However, two years on there are still 70 children waiting more than four months for their operations - with some youngsters left in pain for over a year.

The Irish Sun's Kids Can't Wait campaign is fighting for these young people and calls on the Government to act to fix the wait list hell that leaves children suffering for so long.

Raging Minister Donnelly told the Dail yesterday that he demanded answers from CHI management and the board of CHI about how his €19million was spent but they refused to provide clarity.

As a result, he ordered the HSE's internal audit team to carry out an investigation. And he revealed this week that the majority of this €19million has been spent elsewhere by CHI.

Parents are demanding accountability from CHI.

And Elaine Kelly, of the Scoliosis



Highlighted... our front page story

Awareness & Support Ireland group - who sit on the Government's wait list task force - told the Irish Sun they would be demanding answers from CHI at its next meeting.

Furious... Donnelly



Parents and children demand answers



WAITING lists in Ireland have long been a national disgrace. More than 106,000 children are on hospital waiting lists for all treatments.

However, a new source of shame has emerged, with 288 kids waiting for life-changing spinal surgeries in February.

Their conditions are getting worse as time goes by. Such are the delays, many children will be outside the therapeutic window when their treatments are approved.

In February, the Seanad heard how at least one child has become permanently paralysed since the issue was raised publicly before Christmas. Their plight has been spearheaded by Senator Tom Clonan, who has a child with a disability.

Ex-Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has even admitted the health service is failing these kids.

The Irish Sun's Kids Can't Wait campaign aims to shine a light on how the State is failing sick children and give their families a voice.

It will also push the Government to clear the backlog of operations and give these children a chance of living a normal life. We are calling for children's orthopaedic and urology surgery waiting lists to be cut and for no child to be left waiting over four months for an operation.

If you want to back our call, please sign our petition at thesun.ie by providing your name and email address to show your support.

When we hit 1,000 signatures, we will send it to Government to demand action to end the waiting list fiasco that has gone on too long.

● CALL FOR RESIGNATIONS
● DONNELLY 'WAS WARNED'

How could they let kids down like this?

CHI was spending the €19million funding in 2022 with emails and meetings with officials.

And Una yesterday said she believes an inquiry is needed to get to the bottom of this scandal.

She told The Irish Sun: "The Health Minister was informed by us repeatedly two years ago that the monies were not being allocated by CHI as agreed. He chose to ignore our concerns then and he is ignoring our concerns now."

"Hundreds of children living with spina bifida are no longer receiving an annual review from an orthopaedic spinal surgeon, therefore wait lists of CHI will display artificially low numbers. If the children are not reviewed, they cannot be waitlisted for surgery.

"Harm has been caused to small and vulnerable children.

"For the parents accountability needs to happen, to discover who was aware of what."

And Amanda told The Irish Sun: "The Board of CHI and the former CEO Eilish Hardiman need to be brought before the Public Accounts Committee to answer for all of this. "We would be happy to go in too

and give our side. We have been ignored for far too long."

This latest twist in the waiting list nightmare was labelled "an absolute scandal" in the Dail yesterday as it dominated Leaders' Questions with Tanaiste Micheal Martin admitting that there are oversight issues regarding CHI.

Sinn Fein's Pearse Doherty detailed how advocacy groups raised concerns that this €19m was not being spent appropriately with Minister Donnelly two years ago. Emails seen by The Irish Sun show that the Spina Bifida and

Hydrocephalus Paediatric Advocacy group raised concerns in March, June, July and August of 2022.

Mr Doherty said: "What do you say about a Minister who ignores what is now being proven true that the money was not going to go to treat these children and was going to be spent elsewhere and the Minister ignored these pleas over and over?"

The Tanaiste said the cash was used to pay for 200 additional staff, a new MRI and new operating theatre but confessed the majority of the dough was used more widely than was agreed. Social Democrat health spokeswoman Roisin Shortall said: "Confidence in CHI was already on the floor. If its reputation is to be restored, we need full transparency."

A CHI spokesperson said: "The HSE is currently undertaking an audit in Children's Health Ireland to review this allocation of funds." adam.higgins@the-sun.ie



Concerns... Doherty

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