



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Social Care Department
Office of Older People Services
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10th November 2020

Mr. Michael Lowry T.D.
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 33948/20

To ask the Minister for Health the status of the situation at St. Brigid's Community Hospital, Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary.

Details Supplied

The people of Carrick-on-Suir are questioning why two District Hospitals at Gorey, Co. Wexford and Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny have reopened and resumed operations and services to their communities, while the same has not happened in their town. All three facilities had been designated as COVID-19 step down centres, but both Gorey and Thomastown have now reverted to their former operational use, while St Brigid's remains closed to all services. I am seeking to have a timeframe provided on when St Brigid's will have its COVID designation removed and will resume provision of normal vital services at the hospital.

Dear Deputy Lowry,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

I have reviewed that matter and the following reply is the current position.

In the current Covid-19 pandemic public health emergency, Gorey District Hospital was designated as a Covid-19 step down facility to support flow from Wexford General Hospital and other acute hospitals in the region. Whilst Gorey District Hospital resumed some usual service provision in August 2020, I can advise that it remains a designated unit for Covid-19 and these arrangements are closely monitored on an ongoing basis given the current upsurge in reported cases of Covid-19 in the Wexford area.

St. Columba's Hospital Thomastown is a long stay residential care and rehabilitation facility in the Kilkenny area - it was never designated as a Covid-19 step-down facility.

In the current Covid-19 pandemic public health emergency, St. Brigid's was also designated as a Covid-19 step down facility to support flow from the acute hospitals in the region.

As the demand for Covid-19 step down beds was not required to the level as predicted during the initial Covid-19 pandemic, SECH utilised the staffing resource from St. Brigid's to meet competing demands and priorities in the South Tipperary area. These arrangements have been kept under review - there remains a critical requirement for staff elsewhere in community healthcare services at this time. South East Community Healthcare appreciates the commitment of the excellent team of staff associated with St. Brigid's in taking up redeployment in Covid-19 related roles in community healthcare services.

Interim arrangements are currently in place for patients requiring residential convalescent, emergency respite and palliative care to be accommodated elsewhere in the HSE's community healthcare services in the South Tipperary area.

As services resume, prevailing public health guidance and social distancing requirements will have an impact on service capacity across the system and particularly in our residential and short stay inpatient units. There is an absolute requirement to ensure that strict infection prevention and control measures are implemented across services and that services are delivered in appropriate physical environments that enable adequate social distancing measures at all times, in line with Public Health recommendations.

I wish to advise you that SECH is therefore assessing and reviewing all services and the physical environments that those services are operating in, to determine what actions are required, if any, to enable the safe resumption of services, in line with current guidance.

In addition to service resumption, SECH are required to maintain covid related services and ensure that there are appropriate measures in place to respond to an increased demand for covid related services and activity. The current upsurge in reported cases of Covid-19 requires the HSE and SECH to be fully prepared for increased activity and demand. With regret, SECH is not in a position to advise as to when services will resume at St. Brigid's as service resumption is dependent on the management of Covid related activity within the region along with the need to be assured that services at St. Brigid's can safely resume in a manner which is compliant with prevailing public health guidance and Infection, Prevention and Control guidance.

I wish to re-assure you however that patients who require convalescent, respite and/or palliative care services will be supported in alternative settings at this time.

I trust this clarifies.

Yours sincerely,



Barbara Murphy
Head of Services for Older People
South East Community Healthcare