



Cúram Sláinte  
Phobail, Iarthar  
ag freastal ar Ghailimh,  
Maighne agus Ros Comáin

Community  
Healthcare West  
serving Galway, Mayo  
and Roscommon

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Alan Dillon T.D.,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Dublin 2.

11<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

**PQ 34034/20**

**'To ask the Minister for Health the status of the male unit within the Ballina District Hospital; the planned actions the HSE are undertaking to avoid closure of this male unit; and the recruitment campaign being undertaken to get more nursing staff'.**

Dear Deputy Dillon,

I refer to PQ 34034/20 uploaded on the PAD System on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020 and due for response on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 regarding representations that you have made to the Minister for Health concerning 'the status of the male unit within the Ballina District Hospital; the planned actions the HSE are undertaking to avoid closure of this male unit; and the recruitment campaign being undertaken to get more nursing staff'. The HSE has been requested to reply directly to you on this matter. The following response outlines the position.

In keeping with good practice the HSE has developed contingency plans to deal with potential Covid outbreaks within its Older People Services facilities.

I can confirm that a contingency plan was developed around closing the male ward in Ballina District Hospital so that staff would be available to be redeployed under the National HSE Covid Redeployment Policy to deal with an outbreak in a HSE Community Nursing Unit in North Mayo. While there continues to be significant numbers of staff out on Covid leave, the overall situation in the Nursing Home with the outbreak has improved and accordingly the Ballina District Hospital contingency plan has been stood down for now and Ballina District Hospital is in the process of taking new admissions to the male ward.

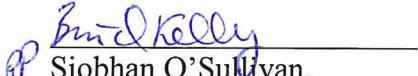
It is important to note that in the event of further outbreaks contingency plans, including that for Ballina District Hospital, may have to be invoked. Communication will take place with staff and their representatives if there is a requirement to invoke contingency plans which involve staff from outside a Unit dealing with a Covid outbreak.

In relation to the recruitment of Nursing staff please be advised that Community Healthcare West HR Recruitment ran a Staff Nurse Older People Services campaign during 2019. As a result a panel of 33 Staff Nurses was formed with 13 of the successful candidates expressing their interest for positions in Co. Mayo. Unfortunately any vacancies for Ballina District Hospital expressed to this panel to date have received no interest from the candidates. Furthermore the HSE's National Recruitment Service also has an ongoing rolling campaign in place for Staff Nurses, Older People Services. This provides for a continuous panel to be in place from which vacancies for all HSE CHO areas including Community Healthcare West can be filled.

Please note that despite not being able to recruit staff for Ballina District Hospital there was sufficient staff with agency staff engaged, if required, to fill the 48 beds in the facility. Also it is important to note that the reduction in beds from 58 to 48 was solely related to maintaining a 2 metre distance between patient beds for infection prevention and control purposes and owing to the Covid pandemic.

I trust that this response has clarified the matter that you have raised in this instance.

Yours sincerely,

  
Siobhan O'Sullivan,  
General Manager,  
Older People Services,  
Community Healthcare West.