



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Social Care Department  
Office of Older People Services  
Lacken  
Dublin Road  
Kilkenny

Telephone 353 56 7784140

16<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Mr. David Cullinane T.D.  
Dail Eireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ 21985/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health his plans for staff relocated from St. Brigid's Hospital, Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

**PQ 21984/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health his plans to resume services at St. Brigid's Hospital, Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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

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

In the current Covid-19 pandemic public health emergency, St. Brigid's was designated as a Covid-19 step down facility to support flow from the acute hospitals in the region, based on the Covid-19 modelling predications that South East Community Healthcare (SECH) was working to at the time. In making this decision, SECH was cognizant of the much valued services that were previously operating from St. Bridget's Hospital.

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. Admission to St. Brigid's Hospital has been suspended.

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.

Management in SECH are both implementing and continuously reviewing the SECH Recovery Plan for the reopening and resumption of services which were temporarily suspended or reduced as a result of Covid-19. Our phased recovery planning is in line with the national HSE Guiding principles for reintroducing services in a COVID environment. 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. 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-19 related services and ensure that there are appropriate measures in place to respond to an increased demand for such 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 provide a date as to when services will resume at St. Bridget's as service resumption is dependent on the management of Covid-19 related activity within the region along with the need to be assured that services can safely resume in a manner which is compliant with prevailing public health 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,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Barbara Murphy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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