

15th December 2021

Deputy Seán Sherlock, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ ref: 59610/21

“To ask the Minister for Health if all respite beds are being used to their maximum capacity in the CHO4 area; if not, the location of beds in units in which there is spare capacity; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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

Since March 2020, Covid 19 has impacted all aspects of our service provision, including respite services. Our priority is to enable our units to deliver safe respite service supports in line with current Public Health advice and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance.

In relation to **services for older persons within Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**, public residential units in Cork and Kerry continue to offer respite services. Unfortunately, our capacity to deliver respite services remains limited across sites. The impact of Covid restrictions and the required reduction in bed numbers to facilitate isolation capacity and social distancing, which are under constant review by HIQA, have led to challenges in providing short stay services, while maintaining maximum capacity in the provision of long term care for existing and new residents in these centres. The availability of respite is dependent on bed availability within the limitations of current IPC measures and the prevailing conditions at any time with regard to positive Covid rates in the community and the hospital itself.

Furthermore, in several of the Cork centres, ongoing refurbishment/upgrade works and capital developments are having an additional impact on bed capacity. Extensive refurbishment works are currently ongoing in Macroom, Skibbereen and Castletownbere. However, both Skibbereen and Castletownbere will be in a position to recommence respite services in the near future. These works will actually restore normal services throughout next year as well as providing greatly improved facilities and comforts for our residents.

Where respite services can be facilitated, admissions are co-ordinated on an ongoing basis between Hospital management and Public Health Nursing departments in order to ensure the greatest possible access and to address the highest needs presenting in the community.

Our respite beds are currently being used to their maximum capacity within the parameters outlined above. Resumption of full respite services across our area remains a service priority for Cork Kerry Community Healthcare.

In relation Disability Services, all respite services are operational in Cork and Kerry; albeit at reduced capacity, with the exception of Cooleens Children’s Respite Service in St Joseph’s Foundation, which remains closed, due to recruitment issues. This respite service is currently operating alternative services;

such as outreach supports, Saturday Clubs, etc. to Priority One and Priority Two children. Three weekend breaks in Trabolgan Holiday Centre were also provided by St Joseph's as a form of Alternative Respite, this was available to all families.

Brothers of Charity Respite Centre in Garrettstown is operating at reduced capacity and will be re-opening fully in coming weeks, pending the recruitment of staff. This centre has recently underwent a significant capital expansion plan and group respite has commenced on a part time basis.

Respite services in Brooke Lodge, Listowel which were suspended to to upgrading works to the building, have been re commenced as the works have recently been completed. Kerry Parents and Friends are once again in a position to provide overnight respite to clients who were availing of respite services now that these works have been completed.

Wave 4 of COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the provision of disability services, where many services were and are suspended due to Covid outbreaks among clients and staff and this is a constantly evolving situation. Agencies frequently need to re-deploy staff from day services and respite in order to maintain and ensure safe staffing levels in residential settings. As one of the key priorities for Cork Kerry Community Healthcare is to restore disability services impacted by the presence of COVID-19 to optimum levels, we have prioritised the booster vaccination programme for healthcare workers and clients in line with government direction and guidance.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare Disability Services will establish a Regional Respite Forum in 2022 whereby any available capacity will be reviewed and allocated based on presenting clients needs on a prioritised basis.

I trust this clarifies the position for you. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Jackie Daly
Head of Service for Older Persons
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare



Ms. Majella Daly,
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Cork Kerry Community Healthcare