



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Head of Service - Older People
South East Community Healthcare
Lacken, Dublin Road
Kilkenny
R95NV08

15th February 2021

Ms. Bríd Smith T.D.
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 6188/21

To ask the Minister for Health if he will clarify the present status of St. Brigid's Hospital, Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary; if the hospital was used as a stepdown facility for Covid-19 patients in 2020; the cost of repurposing the facility for this purpose; the plans for the facility in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Smith,

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

I have reviewed that matter and the following composite response is the position:

St Brigid's Hospital is a short stay unit with 16 beds including 3 palliative, 2 respite and 11 convalescent beds. The HSE operated activity at the hospital and the design and layout of the hospital is largely reflective of a small hospital from the time period that it was built (1837). The older and main part of the hospital is comprised of three floors, with resident bedrooms on the ground and first floor.

As part of the South East response to the Covid-19 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. As the demand for Covid-19 step down beds was not required to the level as predicted during the initial Covid-19 pandemic, South East Community Healthcare (SECH) utilised the staffing resource from St. Brigid's to meet demands in community healthcare services. 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.

As part of health services resumption in a Covid environment, planning, prevailing public health guidance and social distancing requirements are having an impact on the manner in which we are delivering services, particularly in both short stay and residential services. 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 isolation and social distancing measures at all times. As part of planning for services resumption, there is a need to assess 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.

Now more than ever, in this emerging Covid environment, we are required to implement and support infection, prevention and control measures in order to manage this highly infectious disease and maintain our services as safe places.

Substantial refurbishment and extension is required in order to resume short stay services at St. Brigid's Hospital in line with safer, better, healthcare and infection, prevention and control standards. Unfortunately, the current premises are not conducive to support the level of refurbishment and adaptations required to resume short stay inpatient services at St. Brigid's Hospital. This would in effect require the demolition of the existing premises and a complete new build on a very tight site, with a need to raise floor levels by approx. 1 metre. HSE Estates/Technical services have indicated that this is not a viable option.

SECH have engaged with South Tipperary Hospice Home Care Team in discussions and meetings relevant to incorporating the provision of palliative care beds into these interim and future development plans. In the interim, it has been agreed that SECH will provide 2 additional palliative care beds in the existing St. Anthony's Unit in Clonmel - this arrangement is now operational.

While acknowledging the shortcomings of the premises at St. Brigid's in the context of the requirement to deliver short stay services in line with public health guidance and infection control requirements, it is important to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of our staff at St Brigid's Hospital both now and in previous years and the community ethos that prevailed at St. Brigid's Hospital.

In a Covid-19 environment, the HSE is striving to provide safe services to protect patients, services users and our staff delivering care.

It is the preference of SECH to maintain and preserve the community ethos at the existing St. Brigid's site along with maintaining the premises and for this reason; SECH intends to re-purpose St. Brigid's into a Community Health Centre to develop the Community Health Network in South Tipperary.

I trust that this is of assistance. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Yours sincerely,



Ms. Barbara Murphy
Head of Service for Older People
South East Community Healthcare