



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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

12th April 2021

Mr. John McGuinness T.D.
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 17310/21

To ask the Minister for Health the type of health services being delivered at St. Brigid's Hospital, Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary; his plans for the future development of the facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy McGuinness,

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 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 health services resume, 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 was a need to assess all services and the physical environments that those services operate in, to determine what actions required, if any, to enable the safe resumption of services, in line with 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.

It is important to note that people in the Carrick-on-Suir area who require convalescent, emergency respite (during Level 5 restrictions) and/or palliative care services are being supported in alternative settings in the South Tipperary area including St Theresa's Hospital Clogheen and HSE Cluain Arann in Tipperary town and HSE St Anthony's Unit Clonmel.

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

From a staffing perspective, it is important to note that SECH is in the process of engagement with the St. Brigid's staff members with a view to ensuring that they are supported and accommodated during this time. SECH have met both collectively and individually with these staff and their Unions and discussions are ongoing. These are being held virtually at this time due to the current Level 5 restrictions. In addition I can confirm that the HSE/SECH is in regular communication with the Unions involved.

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 reconfigure St. Brigid's into a Community Health Centre with a focus on the creation of a central hub for diabetes management in the community. SECH welcomes this investment and the opportunity to develop specialist teams to meet the needs of the local community including older people and those living with chronic conditions in the South Tipperary area.

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