



CÚRAM SLÁINTE POBAIL
CORCAIGH CIARRAI
CORK KERRY
COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

Oifig na Seirbhísí Sláinte Meabhrach | Cúram Sláinte Pobail Corcaigh & Ciarraí

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
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15th November 2021

Deputy James O' Connor,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 54298/2

“To ask the Minister for Health his views on whether it will be possible to assign an independent assessor to the Owenacurra Centre, Midleton, County Cork, to examine if the problems regarding the centre can be resolved in the short to medium term; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy O'Connor,

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.

Firstly, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare wish to emphasise that safety is central to the provision of quality mental health service. As outlined in correspondences to date, the original plan for the Owenacurra Centre was to refurbish the building so as to bring it to a standard that allows for the provision of care and recovery which a modern service should provide and one that matches the care being provided there. However, as we moved to the advanced planning phase for the centre, serious concerns emerged that any level of refurbishment would not bring the building up to the standards required and neither would it be regarded as fit for purpose by our Regulator. Advice from building experts and our HSE estates function, informed the HSE in its difficult decision to close the centre, given the unacceptable deficiencies in the existing accommodation and the investment of significant funding into a building which would still not bring the unit up to an acceptable accommodation standard for residents.

Whilst we acknowledge the request to assign an independent assessor to the Owenacurra Centre in Midleton, it would not be viable. Any assessment requires an absolute understanding of our clients needs (and in the case of Owenacurra residents, these needs are varied), our staff needs, clinical models of care in operation in the Centre as well as the regulations governing Approved Centres. An assessment without such a foundation would obviously not deliver an appropriate outcome.

Mental Healthcare Facilities prioritise the safety of service users and staff and should be reflected in the environments in which they spend most of their time. The HSE team have experience supporting major strategic service initiatives by delivering key projects and programmes of work. Such projects across specialist mental health services have included the Central Mental Hospital and the Mental Health Development Programme (supporting a Vision for Change). In addition the HSE Estates Department supports the HSE in the provision of expert advice in relation to



the governance, design, planning, procurement, construction, equipping, commissioning and maintenance of healthcare facilities procured in line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's "Public Spending Code". Furthermore, the HSE Estates Department have experience and expertise in capital planning and encompass relevant frameworks such as best practice, design standards and regulatory guidelines, including Accessibility, Health and Safety, Fire Safety, HIQA, Infection Control, Local Authority and Planning requirements into all such projects.

With regards to the current 18 residents of the Owenacurra Centre, our priority is to make sure that we identify the most suitable placement for every resident based on their assessed needs, will and preferences. As acknowledged in communications to date, the process of finding the most appropriate alternative placements for all residents of the Owenacurra Centre will continue for several more months, so as to achieve our aim of finding the most appropriate placements possible and minimise disruption for residents. The process of identifying the most appropriate placement for each resident will involve all key persons including the multi-disciplinary clinical team, the resident and their families and to ensure that the transfer of each individual resident is to the most appropriate setting that will meet their needs and preference. This process is currently underway with a number of meetings having taken place with residents and their families and engagements remain ongoing in this regard.

I trust you find the above clarifies the query raised.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Morrison,
A/Head of Mental Health Services
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare