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Ms Neasa Hourigan, TD,
Dail Eireann,
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19th October 2021

PQ 47836/21 * To ask the Minister for Health the reason the HSE estates department is of the view that no amount of refurbishment could allow the Owenacurra Centre to meet building standards or the standards required by the Mental Health Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Neasa Hourigan

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

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.

Within Owenacurra Centre, one of the primary reasons for commissioning potential improvement works during 2019 was in response to a need to separate day services from residential services in the Centre. Given the restricted nature of the premises and the site, clients accessing day services must travel to/from the day unit via residents living accommodation, an unsatisfactory arrangement. This was one of the deficits raised by the Mental Health Commission. These works were suspended in March 2020 given the simultaneous outbreak of Covid-19 in Ireland. As a consequence of Covid, adherence to public safety measures and for the protection of vulnerable clients, the HSE had to suspend day services nationwide. Whilst very unfortunate, in Owenacurra, this did have the effect of mitigating against the privacy and dignity problems experienced by residents in the Centre. More recently, and with the ability for HSE “normal services” to be recommissioned, the works required in Owenacurra were revisited. Whilst the previously considered works would mitigate against one of the many issues in the Centre, it needs to be borne in mind that inherent, fundamental and unacceptable matters would remain unresolved for clients and staff. For example, a continuance of clients living in 7.5m² bedrooms with no en-suite when the current standard is 22m² (including an en-suite). As well as the residents bedrooms, considerable other issues would also remain unresolved in the Centre including a lack of social spaces, therapeutic spaces and essential staff support accommodation. These concerns are shared by the Mental Health Commission (MHC) who in their inspections noted “The approved centre facilities did not adequately support resident independence and comfort”. Other findings included “Residents single bedrooms were too small with very limited personal space” and “Single bedrooms were too small without adequate furniture to meet residents’ needs, and there was no assisted toilet in the approved centre”. Most recently, the focused inspection this year found that the non-compliance with the regulation on premises was judged to be a critical risk.

To put the above deficiencies in perspective, the Owenacurra Centre is currently c.1,050m². Based on existing standards of accommodation for the client profile in the Centre, a new facility approximately twice the size of the current Centre in the order of c.1,800m² – c.2,000m² would be required. This does not include essential other requirements necessary on-site such as secure, external recreational and therapeutic spaces, 20 – 25 parking spaces (as well as disabled parking spaces, EV parking spaces, bike parking and set down spaces) as well as an independent day unit.

Given the unacceptable deficiencies in the accommodation, the extensive level of investment required to provide a Centre that responds to and meets all client's needs, the age and construction of the building, the restricted size of the site, essential systems such as heating, electrics, building fabric etc. all beyond end of useful life and the premises falling significantly short of the Governments Climate Action Plan requirements, the decision regarding investment of significant funding into a building which would still not bring the unit up to an acceptable accommodation standard for residents became clear resulting in the decision not to proceed with the works.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Curran
National Director,
Capital & Estates