



Ceannasaí Seirbhíse
Seirbhísí do Dhaoine Scothaosta

An Sean Ionad Sláinte, Sráid an Bhiocáire,
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10th Feb 2022

Deputy Catherine Connolly, TD

Dail Eireann,

Leinster House,

Kildare Street,

Dublin 2.

PQ 7964/22

Ref: To ask the Minister for Health the status of plans to create an entire short-stay ward in Merlin park Hospital Community Nursing Unit which would deliver a minimum of 13 respite beds: the impact assessment his Department has carried out regarding the ongoing shortage of respite beds in Galway City and county; and if he will make a statement on the matter ; Deputy Catherine Connolly

Dear Deputy Connolly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted for response. I have examined the matter and following consultation from the GP Unit Merlin Park the following outlines the position

We are pleased to inform you of plans to enhance, sustain and develop the services to Older People currently offered in Merlin Park CNU.

There are 52 beds in Merlin Park CNU which are spread across two units known as Unit 5 (26 beds) and Unit 6 (26 beds). Both units have independent access and are capable of operating as two separate units. Merlin Park CNU comprises of 15 single rooms and the remaining are multi-occupancy rooms with Unit 5 having 4 single rooms and Unit 6 having 11 single rooms. At the time of this letter, the unit is at less than 50% occupancy, a situation that has essentially prevailed since the outbreak of Covid in 2019.

This low level of occupancy is not sustainable and to address this Management in CHW Older Persons Services have reviewed how to best use the capacity and skill set in Merlin Park CNU. There is an opportunity to develop the short stay and respite elements.

Following Covid, there has been a lot of discussion around how we can ensure residents are best protected in the event of any outbreaks of infection. Individual rooms with en-suites are the preference for long term care facilities. There is very little demand for multi-occupancy rooms in residential care facilities. The new build for Merlin Park CNU, for which planning permission was sought prior to Covid, will have all ensuite rooms and single occupancy (other than 2/3 rooms for couples or those opting to share).

Pending the completion of the new build, the current Merlin Park CNU building will operate as one short stay unit with 26 beds and one long stay unit with 26 beds. The short stay beds will be a mixture of intermediate care beds (13) and respite beds (13). Unit 6 has 11 single rooms and as such, is the safest and most obvious unit to place long term residents.

Increasing the capacity of short stay beds comprising of both intermediate care beds and respite beds will go a long way towards offering a much needed publicly funded respite service to the Older People in the area and in assisting Older People in our Acute Hospitals in



discharging earlier. Co-location with the acute hospital provides the benefit for seamless transition.

We are very much looking forward to working with the staff and residents currently in Merlin Park CNU to ensure that this service development is as seamless as possible and is done with minimal disruption.

We will be engaging on a one to one basis with each resident around what the configuration means for them. We will also be engaging with staff and their representational bodies.

The expected timeframe for this to occur is April 2022.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shannon Glynn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shannon Glynn
Head of Service - Older People's Services

Siobhan O'Sullivan
GM - Older People's Services