

5th July 2022

Deputy Neasa Hourigan
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ ref 33499/22

“To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to some Owenacurra centre residents who have still not been informed, almost eight months after the service was due to close, of the location in which they will be placed in the near to long-term; if his attention has been drawn to the impact of this prolonged uncertainty on the residents; if his attention has been drawn to the absence of any capacity in east Cork since June 2021 to take in new referrals of persons with severe and enduring mental illness for local, community-based respite or longer term placement; if this can be constituted as a fair or safe service-plan for this cohort who have to avail of placement in other parts of Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter..”

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.

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, once planning work for this refurbishment began, and based on commissioned reports, it was established that refurbishment would effectively mean demolishing the building, as a full refurbishment in itself would not guarantee that the building would meet building requirements or be regarded as fit for purpose.

The difficult but necessary decision to close the unit was made in consultation with our Estates colleagues given the unacceptable deficiencies in the 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.

There are 11 residents currently in the Owenacurra Centre. The Multi-Disciplinary Team within the Owenacurra Centre continues to have ongoing discussions with the residents and have been endeavouring to work collaboratively with both residents and families to identify placements based on assessed needs and on the will and preference of each resident. The options of long term care in a nursing home and the option of continuing care in a Mental Health Services facility have been discussed with a small number of residents following clinical recommendations. The remaining residents have been assessed as requiring a placement in a High Support Hostel details of which are being discussed on an ongoing, individual basis with each resident.

Within the Cork region, we have different levels of support depending on the assessed needs of individuals. We have other continuing care units and high-support hostels. It is really important to emphasise, however, that we have put significant investment into the community in Cork. We have four home-based treatment teams, one of which is specifically for the east Cork region and the communities of Midleton, Youghal, Cobh and Carrigtwohill. Individuals from Cork may be referred to all of the Community Residences i.e.;

Continuing Care

- St Catherine Ward, St Finbarr's Hospital.
- St Stephens Hospital, Glanmire.

High Support Hostels

- Cois Alla, Kanturk.
- Solus Nua, Mallow.
- Carraigabrick, Fermoy.
- St Coleman's House, Macroom.
- Garnish House, Western Road, Cork.
- Gougane Barra House, Western Rd, Cork.
- Glenmalure House, Blackrock Road.
- Saol Nua, Skibbereen.
- Perrot House, Skibbereen.

In the High Support Hostels, there is an option of utilising one of the places to facilitate brief respite on an assessed needs basis in order to provide an alternative to acute hospital admission and also to facilitate an earlier discharge from an acute approved centre. As individuals in congregated setting were identified as being of higher risk of contracting Covid-19 and separately individuals with severe and enduring mental illness have a higher risk of adverse outcome should they contract Covid-19, all such brief respite admissions stopped in order to protect these vulnerable residences during Covid-19.

We also have a seven-day service in the community. This means that individuals can be seen every day if that is the level of support required. The introduction of that service has proven to be invaluable to individuals and their families when they have periods in which they require increased support. These teams have multidisciplinary support, so, again, they serve to enable individuals to address matters that are causing them either difficulty or distress. The input of social work, occupational therapy and psychology is invaluable, and the community supports are very strong.

In addition to the above supports to service users within the East Cork region, please note we will be providing a new 10-bed rehabilitative residential unit in Midleton town. This service will have 24 hour staffing, and will have a focus on support people to return to their homes and communities. We will appoint a development team which will conduct an options appraisal, and engage with people using mental health services in the area. The Owenacurra site will be among the possible locations considered.

We will also be providing at least one community residence in Midleton town, for three or four residents. This will have 24-hour staffing and will be available to anyone in need of residential mental health services who's needs are assessed (by a psychiatrist) as being met by a service like this. Some of the remaining residents in the Owenacurra Centre may move to this residence if appropriate for their needs and in line with their wishes and it will also be available for future users of mental health services.

The day service has now reopened and at a new location (Respond Housing). We are examining the best permanent location – this may be on the site of the existing Community Hospital where as you know considerable redevelopment is planned.



I trust the above clarifies the queries raised.

Kind Regards,



Mr Kevin Morrison
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Cork Kerry Community Healthcare