

31st March 2022

Deputy Pat Buckley
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ ref 14322/22

“To ask the Minister for Health the reason that the HSE will not build a new fit-for-purpose mental health centre on the grounds of the Owenacurra Health Centre, Midleton, County Cork retaining all existing pre-Covid-19 services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

PQ ref 14323/22

“To ask the Minister of Health the reason that the HSE would not build a new purpose-built mental health centre to replace the existing Owenacurra Health Centre, Midleton, County Cork on the adjacent grounds at the Midleton Community Hospital and retain all pre-Covid-19 services;”

Dear Deputy Buckley,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare wish to emphasise that safety is central to the provision of a quality mental health service. 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.

The HSE recognizes the interdependencies of risks, e.g. the relative safety of the service user and staff is dependent on the safety of the environment in which care is delivered. 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. With this in mind, there are no plans to use the Owenacurra building for alternative purposes however I can confirm that the site of the Owenacurra Centre will be used in the future for appropriate Mental Health Services and to serve the community.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare recognises community services as a valuable resource in dealing with many health problems, including mental health problems and we welcome the governments ongoing investment in community based mental health services. We will continue to seek resources aligned to the proposed model of care as outlined in the ‘*Sharing the Vision*’ document and also aligning our existing resource to do so in as an effective manner as possible.

The priority for the service remains the welfare of the remaining residents of the centre. We continue to work with each resident individually and consult with their families to agree an appropriate alternative placement based on their assessed needs and their will and preference. Residents continue to move on a phased basis and the work with each resident is on-going.

I trust the above clarifies the queries raised.

Kind Regards,



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