

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022

Deputy Pat Buckley,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 42843/22**

**“To ask the Minister for Health the number of new long-term and short-term respite beds that have been approved and allocated in each of the electoral areas in east Cork in each of the years 2019 to 2021 and to date in 2022, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”**

Dear Deputy Buckley,

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.

In compiling my response I have consulted with my colleagues in Older Persons Services and Disability Services in regard to the position in their respective Care Groups

**Mental Health**

Mental Health Services in Cork Kerry Community Healthcare aim to promote and protect the mental health of the population and to provide effective services to those who need them. Mental Health Services work collaboratively with other Health and Social Care Services. Our services have a strong focus on recovery and co-production and have consistently sought to develop and enhance community based services and reduce, where appropriate, those treated in more acute services.

Services are provided through community mental health teams and these teams are supported by day hospitals, day centres and community residences / high support hostels and inpatient units.

Within Mental Health Community Residences, 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 settings 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. By way of update, I have been advised that if there is a requirement for this service, the rehabilitation team can assess the individual's needs and formulate a care plan, and if clinically appropriate, a short stay can be arranged in the community if all infection prevention control measures have been adhered to within that particular residence. This would also be dependent on bed availability within Cork Mental Health Services.

### Older Persons Services

Respite care for older people is generally a planned short admission, usually of one or two week's duration. Access to same is dependent on bed availability and can be arranged by an individual's primary care team/public health nursing service. Respite services operated at a reduced capacity throughout the pandemic as a result of prevailing public health advice at the time which was singularly focused on keeping some of the most vulnerable safe during the pandemic. During this time, some respite beds remained open while others were temporarily repurposed as isolation facilities.

16 respite beds (HSE and contracted beds) are currently operational in the East Cork area. Additional respite beds in North and South Lee may be accessible for East Cork respite applicants through the Public Health Nursing service, subject to availability.

With regard to the allocation of new respite beds for older people in the catchment area of East Cork, the table below sets out the number that have been approved and allocated from 2019 to 2022:

East Cork – New Respite Beds	2019	2020	2021	Current – 2022
Fermoy Welfare Home (HSE)	-	0	0	9

Fermoy Welfare Home was refurbished and repurposed for use as a short-stay transitional care unit in May 2020 during the Covid 19 pandemic for clients in the acute sector who were transitioning to home or long term care. It closed temporarily in July 2021 but reopened on the 8th February 2022 and currently offers 9 respite beds, 4 transitional care beds and 1 palliative care bed.

A review of respite bed availability across the region is currently underway in order to identify potential areas where respite capacity for older people can be improved and more closely aligned with demographic demand.

### Disability Services

St Raphael's Centre has not increased capacity over the years indicated as St. Raphael's was undertaking a Decongregation project with the main institution closing and a number of new community houses opening.

St Raphael's Centre currently does not offer any respite services nor are there any immediate plans to do so.

There has been no increase in the number of respite beds in the East Cork area over the last 3 years. As part of operational planning in the service the East Cork has been identified as an area of need for additional respite beds. We await outcome of the Estimates process in order to establish if additional funding will be made available for respite in 2023.

I trust the above clarified the queries raised.

Kind Regards,



**Hugh Scully**  
**A/General Manager**  
**Mental Health Services**  
**Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**