



**Head of Service for Older Persons
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**
Health Service Executive
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Cúram Sláinte Pobail - Corcaigh & Ciarraí
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4th May 2023

Deputy Colm Burke, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ ref 18472/23:

"To ask the Minister for Health the action his Department is taking to deal with the shortage of community beds in the Cork/Kerry region in view of the fact that 240 beds have been removed from the system in the past four years, and also taking into account that beds are being occupied in Cork University Hospital by patients who could have been discharged over three months ago into appropriate care in the community, and this delay in discharge is preventing the admission of patients to the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter".

Dear Deputy Burke,

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.

Community Hospitals/Community Nursing Units are an essential component of our national health infrastructure, but many of our public units are housed in buildings that are less than ideal in the modern context. The number of available community hospital beds has reduced in the Cork Kerry Community Healthcare region recently, primarily due to the refurbishment and infrastructural programme undertaken to comply with regulatory requirements and improve our facilities for our residents.

It is important to note also that there are challenges in recruiting staff to work across residential services, which is similar to all aspects of healthcare recruitment at this time. In addition, the current bed stock of community beds in this CHO is dispersed across the entire counties of Cork and Kerry. In line with population growth and needs within Cork City, CKCH has identified that there is a need for increased residential capacity for older people within this geographical area. CKCH is currently liaising with the National Office around bed capacity needs for the area.

Changes in regulations have led to a reduction in the maximum number of beds in multi-occupancy rooms and some of our units require reconfiguration and refurbishment works to comply with this requirement. Works are underway in a number of our Community Hospitals to comply with HIQA regulations and facilitate a move away from the 'open ward' model to more private rooms which will ultimately result in enhanced facilities for our current and future residents. Capital projects are currently underway in our community hospitals in Kanturk, Millstreet, Clonakilty, Macroom, Fermoy and Kinsale and bed capacity has been temporarily impacted in some units while these works are ongoing. Reconfiguration of multi-occupancy bedrooms supports residents' privacy and dignity and also supports physical distancing of residents in order to minimise the risk of transmission of infection.



In addition, construction of three new community nursing units (at St Finbarr's in Cork city, Midleton and Killarney), in the region is currently underway and this is temporarily impacting bed availability. Most of these beds will be reopened and compliant with new regulations following completion of these essential projects.

Work also continues on converting the former Blarney Golf and Leisure Resort into an additional 50-bed Community Nursing Unit and this will be a welcome addition to the community hospital bed complement in this area. The new 60 bed extension at Heather House will further enhance public bed capacity in the region.

Table 1 illustrates long and short stay bed capacity within Cork Kerry Community Healthcare's 26 public facilities as at March 2023:

Table 1 – Long and short stay beds:

Number of Facilities	Long Stay Beds (NHSS)	Short Stay Beds	Total Bed Stock
26	1007	232	1239

Table 2 highlights additional capacity contracted across five private nursing homes in this region from the Winter Plan funding. The total beds listed (54) are additional to the public beds listed in Table 1 above.

Table 2 – additional contracted beds:

Nursing Home Provider	Location	Total Beds
Care Choice	Macroom, Co Cork	10
Care Choice	Ballynoe, Co Cork	10
Independent	Churchtown South, Co Cork	5
Independent	Kinsale, Co Cork	5
Riverstick	Riverstick, Co Cork	24
Total		54

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare will continue to endeavour to ensure that the maximum number of people that can be safely accommodated in our community hospitals are being accommodated and is committed to optimising service provision for our region.

I trust this clarifies the position. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



 Jackie Daly
 Head of Service for Older People

