

4th July 2023

Ms. Neasa Hourigan, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 29790/23

“To ask the Minister for Health the number of public representatives who applied to HSE management for consent to make political videos on the grounds of HSE health settings in CHO4 for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022; the names of the HSE representatives who monitored the making of those political videos, as per the HSE communications policy; if applicable, the number of public representatives who made such political videos on HSE grounds without consent and who were later contacted by HSE management in relation to this; 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.

There are clear restrictions on photography and filming on Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CKCH) health settings in order to protect the privacy and dignity of the people using our services, particularly more vulnerable service users. Anyone who wishes to take photos or record footage for broadcast or circulation must contact the CKCH Communications Teams. Filming or photography can only go ahead if either a member of the Communications Team or a local manager is available to accompany the photographer or filmmaker. The person engaged in the photography or filming must undertake to protect the privacy of staff and the public, and must seek written consent from anyone who appears in a photo or video. This protocol is particularly important at campuses used by more vulnerable service users or where there are residential settings. People accessing our services have the right to do so without the perception that they may be filmed without their consent. At residential settings, residents have a right to expect that they are not inadvertently filmed while within their home.

In recent years, the CKCH press office function has publicly reiterated the policy that recording and photography at health campuses and facilities can only take place by prior arrangement. This has been done by direct updates to staff; by reminders to media outlets, and by reminders to the public via media outlets. Unfortunately unauthorised photography and filming still takes place.

The Communications Team does not hold a log of applications to film or carry out photography at CKCH sites. There is no record of applications from elected public representatives to carry out recordings in either 2020, 2021 or 2022. In November 2021, a request from a media outlet to take photos of an elected public representative at St Stephen’s campus in Cork. This was declined. It is not possible to confirm the number of times where filming took place at CKCH settings without authorisation, as we are not made aware of such filming in advance.

There have been occasions where staff members at some sites have been put in a position where they have to ask individuals to cease filming or photography, in the interests of the privacy and dignity of service users. There is no register of these incidents, and it is not possible to state whether or not such incidents involved elected representatives.

In June 2023, the Communications Team contacted a number of elected representatives about recording at St Stephen's campus in Cork. Some of the recordings were recent and others took place in previous years but only recently came to the team's attention. The Communications Team was not aware of these historic examples, and retrospectively followed up with the individuals involved by email once they were brought to the team's attention. As the St Stephen's campus is home to a range of health services, including a residential mental health services and CAMHS, it is not appropriate for filming to take place there. Requests from media outlets for photography or filming on the campus in 2021 and 2022 were declined.

The Communications Team will continue to follow up on any such examples of unauthorised filming and photography as the team becomes aware of it. In all cases, the team will remind the person or media outlet involved of the restrictions on filming and photography.

Yours sincerely,



Tess O'Donovan
Chief Officer

