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25th March 2024

Deputy Sean Sherlock,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 49837/23

“To ask the Minister for Health the date a medical institution will reopen (details supplied)”.

Details supplied: Bantry Mental Health Unit: The unit closed in October for essential works, with an anticipated reopening in February. Concerns have been raised about the lack of proper communication with stakeholder groups, such as Gardaí, GPs, and other mental health services, regarding the closure. Staff members are anxious about potential delays in reopening, especially considering the closure of other community mental health initiatives. Improved communication, including monthly updates, is sought between staff and management to prevent any complacency.

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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

Prior to the temporary closure of the Centre for Mental Healthcare and Recovery (CMHCR) on October 2023 a working group was established. This group comprises of the Executive Clinical Director Adult Mental Health Services, Clinical Director West Cork Mental Health Services, General Manager/Registered Proprietor Nominee, Area Director of Nursing, Assistant Director of Nursing, Area Administrator and Project & Compliance Officer. The purpose of this group is to identify how best to progress the required upgrades to the unit as quickly as possible in order to re-commence providing acute admission services for people in the West Cork area in a safe, fit-for-purpose building.

Initially it was our intention to reopen the Centre on 1st February 2024. However, due to unforeseen supply chain delays in attaining materials crucial for the completion of the ongoing renovation the project completion date had to be revised to 31st July, 2024. The group identified above are working to try to bring this completion date forward to enable an earlier re-opening date.

For the duration of the temporary closure the following communication measures are in place;

Part of the standing agenda of the working group identified above includes communication pathways with identified stakeholders, this is reviewed on a weekly basis. Monthly updates from this group are shared with the local management team for heads of discipline to share information directly with staff members under their line management.

The Area Administrator for the CMHCR continues to liaise with the Bantry General Hospital Manager to advise on the progress of works. An escalation pathway is in place between the Area Administrator and the Bantry General Hospital Manager for any issues that may arise on campus during the temporary closure of the centre.

From the Clinical perspective the ECD & CD MHS liaise with their clinical counterparts in BGH on a scheduled basis to discuss any issues arising as the works progress towards completion



In relation to the temporary closure and extension of the date communication was issued from HOS office to stakeholders including BGH, National Ambulance Service, GPs, Staff and Trade Unions. This was also followed up by the Clinical Director/Executive Clinical Director, and Area Director of Nursing as identified and lines of communication continue to remain open.

A formal meeting has taken place with the trade unions, and additional meetings have been scheduled for future engagement regarding the re-opening of the CMHCR

The three established Community Mental Health Teams in West Cork continue to function in the same way as pre closure. To augment the existing Multi-Disciplinary Teams in community services some Nursing staff from the CMHCR have been redeployed while the CMHCR remains closed. This aspect of continuity of care is being addressed daily by the relevant MDT's and is discussed as part of the standing agenda at the Bantry Project meeting on a weekly basis.

There is also a Team Co-ordinator who is part of the local management team meetings and is a long established direct link to the GP's in the West Cork area.

We look forward to welcoming patients back to an enhanced building that reflects our dedication to providing the highest standard of care. In the interim the below measures are in place and will continue until the re-opening

- A *"Single point of contact"* for West Cork Mental Health Service is in place to sign-post Mental Health Services and to direct queries to the appropriate clinician.
- A consultation service for Bantry General Hospital as existed previous continues in its current format Mon to Fri.
- Also as per previous an NCHD and consultant psychiatrist are available for consultations on Saturdays Sundays and Bank Holidays.
- Out-of-hours non-routine assessments and applications for assessment under the Mental Health Act take place in either the Acute Mental Health Unit, Cork University Hospital, or St Michael's Unit, Mercy Hospital Cork.
- 24 hour nursing support is provided by the Duty Assistant Director of Nursing by day & On Call Assistant Director of Nursing out of hours. Duty CNM2 by day & duty CNM2 by night

I trust the above clarifies the queries raised.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Julie O'Neill'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ms. Julie O' Neill
Head of Service
Mental Health Services
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare