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12th May, 2025

Ms. Holly Cairns., T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 19131/25

" To ask the Minister for Health the progress made to date under the National Islands Policy 2023-2033 to improve access to health services on the offshore islands of Ireland such as Cape Clear and Bere Island, including both primary care and older persons' services; and if she will make a statement on the matter."

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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.

Under the National Islands Policy 2023-2033, the West Cork Islands Health Forum works in partnership with the West Cork Islands Representatives to promote and progress improved access to health, emergency services and to enhance the wellbeing of the island populations. (This forum was established in 2022 and links in with the overall HSE National Islands Committee).

Working from the Islands Primary Care on Islands Strategy 2017, a forum/committee comprising of the following HSE personnel as:

- Community work
- Public Health Nursing
- Network Manager CHN 10 (West Cork)
- Health promotion and well being
- National Ambulance Service
- Chronic Disease management
- And
- 4 Island Representatives – representing the 7 islands.

The aim is to work with island communities to promote health and wellbeing and the development of eHealth Solutions (from the Our Living Islands Strategy).

Cork South Community Work department supports a variety of community led services such as

- Meals on wheels
- Active Retirement Groups
- Supporting the employment of an older persons worker
- Supporting community initiatives such as community health and wellbeing days and Supportive Saturdays for Brian Health (Beara Peninsula).

The West Cork Islands forum has progressed many health supports to the West Cork Islands

- Public Health Nursing Service – across the islands
- Supporting Community First Responders and Emergency First Responders and all islands have defibrillators. Training on what to do in an emergency.

The forum delivered a 2-day design thinking event that was attended by HSE personnel across Commuity/Primary Care, GP, hospital services and Islanders to achieve collaborative recommendations

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for health service delivery and supports. A key related output from this process has been promotion of digital health to enhance service access.

The HSE is actively engaged with the Islands on promoting digital health and are piloting a digital health connectivity strategy supported on the Attend Anywhere platform in conjunction with national primary care in the West Cork Area.

We have and continue to work in a community development partnership approach with the West Cork Islands: the communication strategy has involved 3 health promotional roadshow days across Bere Island, Cape Clear and Sherkin Island. The purpose of this was to inform and to engage with Islanders on what health services are available and how to access.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mari O'Donovan
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