



**Oifig na Bainisteoir Limistéir Chomhtháite
Cúraim Sláinte Chorcaí Thuaidh agus
Thoir.**

FSS Iardheiscirt, Áras na Ceachan, Páirc
Ghnó agus Teicneolaíochta, Bóthar na Modh
Feirme, Corcaigh

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08th July 2025

Mr. Michael Collins, TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 35008/25:

“To ask the Minister for Health if plans are in place for a designated respite hospital in County Cork (details supplied); and if not, the reason”.

Details Supplied:

“For the past number of years there has been a huge deficit in respite beds both in the public and private nursing homes. There is an urgent need for a designated Respite Hospital in Cork county, to cater for post op patients convalescing from surgery, and respite care for home based patients whose full time carers need annual respite breaks”.

Dear Deputy Collins,

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

Provision of respite is hugely important for carers as it offers an opportunity to take a break from the stresses of caring.

From a **Services for Older Persons** perspective, respite care for an older person is generally a pre-planned short admission of one or two week's duration and is dependent on the needs of carers.

Residential respite care for older persons may be provided in the community in HSE residential care settings, by agreement with voluntary organisations or by contracted private facilities. Respite beds for older persons are categorised as short stay beds; short stay beds can incorporate respite, convalescent, palliative, rehabilitation or transitional care beds and some of these categories come under the remit of other care groups. Respite beds in public or private residential units and utilised by Services for Older Persons, HSE South West, can be interchangeable for use in response to particular service needs and therefore it is important to note that the total number of respite beds can occasionally fluctuate due to this interchangeability.

The provision of residential respite services for older people has come under increasing pressure in recent years due to a number of factors, including an increase in the number of people who are seeking access to respite as a result of general population increase; increasing levels of complexity across the sector due to better and improved health care and the impacts of regulatory standards and national policy on capacity. Access to a respite bed is dependent on bed availability, and is arranged and managed by the Public Health Nursing service.

Works have been ongoing in our Community Hospitals to comply with SI 293 and HIQA regulations, to facilitate a move away from the 'open ward' model, supporting residents' privacy and dignity and also



supporting physical distancing of residents in order to minimise the risk of transmission of infection. Many of these projects are completed or nearing completion which will result in beds returning to the system and a consequent increase in beds available for short stay use, including respite care.

Services for Older Persons is not currently aware of plans to develop a designated central respite unit in County Cork and it is our experience that, for convenience for both the person and their family, carers prefer to access the service as locally as possible. This supports the current model of service provision from our long stay units, in line with Sláintecare principles. Therefore the provision of respite from a single location may not suit our user group. Furthermore, the throughput in our own units of people from the local area for short stays has a beneficial outcome for our residents in long term care and has the effect of maintaining and strengthening links with the wider community.

We continuously review our services in line with population health planning and Sláintecare principles to ensure the ongoing development of modern services across the Cork region. As long as the number of people seeking respite bed access continues to increase, we will continue to seek to identify opportunities to enhance respite bed capacity and availability in line with the key Sláintecare goal of getting the right care as close to home as possible. Bed capacity is constantly being reviewed across the region to ensure that older people with care needs in the home can be cared for in the community and can receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time, closer to where they live.

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

Sonya Cotter

Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Cork North and East

HSE South West