

**Head of Service for Older Persons**  
HSE South West - Health Service Executive  
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**Ceann na Seirbhíse do Dhaoine Scothaosta**  
FSS Iardheiscirt -Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Teach Caha, Párc Ghnó & Teicneolaíochta  
Bóthar na Modh Feirme, Corcaigh  
**Tel: 021 4923854**

26<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Deputy Michael Collins, T.D.,  
Dáil Éireann  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 24124/25:**

**“To ask the Minister for Health the reason there are very few convalescence beds available in West Cork, which is delaying patient discharges from the acute hospitals and slowing recovery”.**

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.

Convalescent or step down care is an important component in meeting the specific care needs of patients whose episode of acute medical/surgical care is complete but who are not as yet ready to be discharged to their place of residence. Convalescence beds in our HSE units, together with respite, transitional care, palliative and rehabilitation beds, are classified as short stay beds. West Cork currently has 32 short stay beds in operation across Clonakilty, Skibbereen, Dunmanway and Schull Community Hospitals and these beds can be interchangeable for use depending on the demand in an area at any particular time. Thus the total number of convalescence beds in any one month can fluctuate up and down.

HSE South West constantly reviews services offered in this region, including West Cork, in order to optimise bed capacity in line with demand. Due to an increasing volume of applications for long term care in the region, our current priority is to ensure maximum availability within this bed category. By way of example, a recent examination of Bantry Hospital Delayed Discharge data revealed that 75% of these patients were awaiting long term care placement with none of the remainder requiring convalescent or short term residential care at that time.

It should be noted that the opening of additional beds (long stay or short stay) at any of our units requires adequate staffing levels to be in place, including an appropriate number and skill-mix of staff, to ensure the safety of both our residents and our staff. Any increase in capacity at any of our units also requires registration of the additional beds with HIQA.

There are currently no immediate plans to increase short stay bed capacity in the West Cork region based on current demand in the area. However, HSE South West is committed to maximising all available supports for older people in the West Cork region and if the number of people seeking access to convalescence/respite/short stay beds increases, we will work to identify opportunities to enhance capacity and availability. To this end, we will continue to review demand for and provision of HSE community hospital beds – long stay and short stay – in the West Cork area.

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

Yours sincerely,

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**Jackie Daly**  
**Head of Service for Older Persons**