

MINUTES **MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

Date: Thursday 24th of February 2022. **Time:** 2.00pm
Venue: The Oriel House Hotel, Ballincollig, Co Cork

Present:

Cllr Ann Marie Ahern
Cllr Audrey Buckley
Cllr Cathal Byrne
Cllr Peter Cleere
Cllr John Coonan
Cllr Michael Doran
Cllr Pat Dunphy
Cllr Pat Fitzgerald
Cllr Damien Geoghegan
Cllr Pat Hayes
Cllr Niall Kelleher
Cllr Roger Kennedy

Cllr Donal Kenny
Cllr Garry Laffan
Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley
Cllr Eileen Lynch
Cllr Michael McCarthy
Cllr Arthur McDonald
Cllr Conor McGuinness
Cllr Richie Molloy
Cllr Norma Moriarty
Cllr John O'Donoghue
Cllr Ted Tynan

Apologies:

Cllr Declan Burgess
Cllr Danny Collins
Cllr Davy Daniels
Cllr Susan McCarthy
Cllr John McDonald
Cllr Sean O'Donovan
Cllr John Sheehan
Cllr Mikey Sheehy
Cllr James Tobin

In Attendance:

Mr Gerry O'Dwyer, Chief Executive Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group
Mr Jackie Daly, A/Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare
Ms Tracy Nugent, HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention
Mr Martin Ryan, HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention
Mr Nicky Glynn, Chief Ambulance Officer, NAS
Regional Health Forum Office Staff

Cllr Eileen Lynch, Vice Chairperson gave apologies for Cllr Declan Burgess who could not attend the meeting and was chairing the meeting in his absence.

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 2nd of December 2021.

On the proposal of Cllr Roger Kennedy, seconded by Cllr Arthur McDonald, the minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 2nd of December 2022 were approved and adopted by the members.

Welcome to new Members - Cllr Michael Doran has replaced Cllr Brian O'Donoghue, Carlow County Council and Cllr Cathal Byrne has replaced Cllr Frank Staples, Wexford County Council.

2. Chairperson's Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Covid Update

A brief update was provided from HSE Management on COVID-19. Mr Gerry O'Dwyer, Chief Executive Officer, South /South West Hospital Group outlined to Members how the current surge of Covid is continuing to have a significant impact on hospital staffing levels with associated service pressures. Mr O'Dwyer informed Members of how the Hospital Group continues to adapt and how the system responds to cope with the pandemic challenges presenting.

Ms Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare and Ms Jackie Daly, A/Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare provided Members with updates from their respective Community Service areas. They also outlined the serious impact on staffing levels in community services. Both Managers provided brief updates on Covid outbreaks across community residential services as well as the vaccination/booster programme and future plans for testing.

Whilst Covid-19 has disrupted and altered the way health care is delivered, Ms Killeen White commended our staff for their resilience, dedication and commitment.

3. Committees

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

- South East Committee Meeting held on 1st of March 2022
- South West Committee Meeting held on 3rd of March 2022

4. Suicide Resource Officers Presentation

Ms Tracy Nugent HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention South East Community Healthcare (CHO5) and her Cork Kerry Healthcare CHO4 counterpart Mr Martin Ryan gave a very informative presentation on their roles and work programmes. HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs) work across a range of Community Health Services, Community Health Organisations (CHOs) and areas nationwide. The Suicide Resources Officers are the leads for the development and implementation of 'Connecting for Life', Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide at regional and county levels. They offer a range of training programmes to raise public awareness; to train people to identify those at risk and to connect them to suicide First Aid resources; and to equip participants with skills to intervene and support people at risk. Training is also available in relation to understanding and addressing self-harm and in supporting people who are bereaved through suicide. The presentation outlined the work ongoing in different groups and

settings in our communities. There followed a question and answer session along with an invitation and encouragement by Ms Nugent for Members to undertake Suicide Awareness and Prevention training.

5. Notices of Motion

(a) Cllr John Coonan moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

“In light of the unacceptable sub- standard and a serious deficit of CAMHS services in South Kerry, that an urgent report on the delivery of CAMHS, county by county be outlined to the Forum.”

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare and Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Coonan thanked Management for the written response. He stated that there should be a national focus on children and that prevention, early detection and support services for children should be prioritised. Full staffing (and funding) of CAMHS teams should also be prioritised. Service/team deficits give rise to people speaking negatively about CAMHS. Lengthy waiting lists for services are distressing for the children and their families. Cllr Coonan cited concerns in relation to barriers to service provision including inappropriate referrals to CAMHS services by General Practitioners given ongoing issues in accessing primary care psychology services.

In response Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, acknowledged the importance of an overall national focus on children and outlined the paediatric model of care which seeks to develop a spectrum of integrated services for children. Adequate resourcing and the availability of necessary skills and training, multi-disciplinary teams as appropriate are essential for the development of children’s services. Across the country there are significant recruitment and retention challenges throughout Primary Care, Disability Services and CAMHS. The HSE continues efforts to source and recruit suitably qualified medical, nursing and allied health professional staff into CAMHS services. Ms Killeen White also outlined that the complex nature of referrals and presentations to CAMHS services. The HSE is committed to ensuring all aspects of CAMHS services are delivered in a consistent, timely and safe manner, including improved access and reducing waiting lists.

With regard to the South Kerry CAMHS review, Ms Jackie Daly, A/Chief Officer, informed Members that the HSE is in communication with the families and young people impacted by the Maskey Review Report and will continue to offer our support. An oversight structure is being established to ensure delivery of a comprehensive plan for implementing all of the 35 recommendations contained in Maskey Review Report. A helpline has been established and counselling provided for those impacted by the Review.

Ms Daly, in response to queries raised at this Forum, advised that HSE/Cork Kerry Community Healthcare would follow up directly on any related individual communication issues raised.

(b) Cllr Richie Molloy moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

“Regarding the ongoing issues of recruiting and retaining home care workers in the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) sector in the South East, will the HSE consider giving money towards mileage for section 39 Home Care Workers.”

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Molloy thanked Ms Killeen White for her written response. He highlighted the serious issues in relation to the recruitment and retention of Care staff. The grant funding received does not cover increasing transport mileage costs which is a significant difficulty for carer providers. Many of these care staff work in rural areas. This matter is impacting on the ability to recruit and retain care staff which then creates risks and challenges in delivering care services and supports to support vulnerable people in their own homes. Ms Killeen White acknowledged the hugely important contribution of NGOs/Section 39 agencies in the provision of these services in local communities.

(c) Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"That this Forum will progress policy regarding our retained fire service members, that they be able to assist the National Ambulance Services as first responders and to be deployed in cardiac arrest calls to help alleviate the pressures on the NAS. That sufficient adequate training be provided to firefighters so as they can safely provide this service. And that permission be sought from the HSE National Ambulance service to be able to assist them and provide this service, and that immediate engagement commence to allow this service to be up and running as soon as possible".

A written response from Mr Nicky Glynn, Operations Officer Chief Officer, National Ambulance Service was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Lenihan Foley thanked the National Ambulance Services for the written reply and stated that she was satisfied with same. Mr Glynn provided some supplementary information from a national perspective to Cllr Lenihan Foley in addition to the written response.

(d) Cllr Conor McGuinness moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That the HSE would ensure the drug Cariban for the treatment of Hyperemesis Gravidarum and pregnancy sickness would be available as required by pregnant women attending both in-patient and out-patient maternity services. At present only a number of hospitals offer this medication to pregnant women attending in-patient services. Those not able to avail of these services must purchase the medication themselves are significant cost. Pregnancy Sickness is a very serious condition and should be considered as such".

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Interim Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospital Group was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr McGuinness thanked Management for this response. He highlighted Cariban is a pregnancy related medication is currently not reimbursable under GMS and Community Drug Schemes. The cost of this medication (which helps prevent extreme nausea and vomiting during pregnancy) is impacting on the health of pregnant women. Cllr McGuinness wanted to understand the basis for which Cariban is provided to women in certain hospital settings. Mr Gerry O'Dwyer advised Cllr McGuinness that he would review this matter within the South/South West Hospital Group and revert to him directly.

(e) Cllr Norma Moriarty moved the following Motion, standing in Cllr Mikey Sheehy's name:

"That this Forum is provided with an update on the recruitment process for extra nurses at West Kerry Community Hospital so that the closed ward can be opened for West Kerry patients."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

(f) Cllr Eileen Ryan moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"Can the HSE please outline whether there are any plans to develop the old Health Centre building which forms part of the Macroom Community Hospital grounds and had previously been ear-marked as a potential Day Care Centre for the elderly."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Lynch welcomed the reply which outlined the major refurbishment works (extension and upgrade) which will bring Macroom Community Hospital into line with HIQA regulations. Ms Jackie Daly, A/Chief Officer, responded to additional queries regarding the tender stage process and the expected timescale for the phased completion of the community hospital refurbishment programme in 2023.

6. Questions

(a) Cllr. John Coonan put forward the following question:

"That a review of the structures and functioning of the Communications Dept. of South East Community Healthcare be presented to our Forum."

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Coonan thanked Management for this reply. Cllr Coonan informed the Meeting that whilst he submitted this question, however, his intent was actually more in relation to keeping local elected representatives informed when issues such as the South Kerry CAMHS case arose. Cllr Coonan stated that there was a resulting impact of matters such as this case on other CAMHS Services in different HSE areas. Elected representatives have an important role in informing and reassuring the public and local communities in such times.

Ms Killeen White in response acknowledged this and also the ongoing support from our Regional Health Forum Members and other elected representatives and particularly throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic. Ms Killeen White advised that SECH had provided written updates to Regional Health Forum South East Members on Covid-19 and previously arranged engagements with local elected representatives on particular local health service matters. In addition the HSE/SECH has re-commenced engagements with Oireachtas Members.

Ms Killeen White also advised Members that HSE/SECH continues to respond to political representations directly received from elected representatives and County Councils and also requests received the HSE National Parliamentary Affairs Division.

Ms Killeen White welcomed the inputs from Cllr Coonan and advised the SECH would undertake to consider how best we can improve communication with our key stakeholders.

(b) Cllr. Patrick Dunphy put forward the following question:

“What is the current status in the South East of providing Home Care for those who have been approved for it.”

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Dunphy thanked Ms Killeen White for the written reply. He asked how this issue might be resolved. Ms Killeen White stated that South East Community Healthcare is acutely aware that there are staffing capacity issues across both direct and indirect provision of Home Support. We continue to advertise on an on-going basis for healthcare assistants and to recruit as many suitable candidates as possible. There is a need to look at attracting people into the home support sector and also how we might best manage more complex cases presenting to our services. This issue requires a cross-department integrated approach. Work is ongoing at a national level in relation to Home Support Services which will inform local service areas and improvement plans. Ms Killeen White advised Members that further information would also be presented by the SECH Head of Services for Older People at the upcoming South East Committee meeting.

(c) Cllr. Mary Lenihan Foley put forward the following question:

“That this Forum like others throughout the Country would back the proposed NAS/Fire Service Co-Responder Scheme roll out across the County to assist the ambulance service to respond to 999 emergency calls as quickly as possible.”

A written response from Mr Nicky Glynn, Operations Officer Chief Officer, National Ambulance Service was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Lenihan Foley thanked the National Ambulance Services for the written reply and stated that she was satisfied with same.

(d) Cllr Arthur McDonald put forward the following question standing in the name of Cllr John McDonald:

“The Tullow Primary Care Centre was to have started in 2020. Nothing has happened regarding this build. Where are we on the plans for Tullow Primary Centre. Is it on the agenda of the HSE for construction. Has there been contact with Carlow County Council regarding pre planning for the building.”

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

(e) Cllr Conor McGuinness put forward the following question:

“To ask the total quantum of additional ICU capacity added to the South/South West Hospital Group/Ireland East Hospital Group from March 2020 to present”

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Interim Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospital Group was circulated to members and noted.

(f) Cllr Norma Moriarty put forward the following question standing in the name of Cllr Mikey Sheehy:

"Can the SSWHG confirm which of the following elective work is restored fully in UHK - ENT, Gynaecology, Orthopaedics and Surgery and what are the plans to expand theatre space in the immediate future/short term in order to ensure all consultants are appropriately resourced to alleviate waiting lists and avoid undue usage of NTPF."

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Interim Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospital Group was circulated to members and noted.

(g) Cllr Eileen Lynch put forward the following question:

"In relation to the recent restructure of community based drug and alcohol services in Cork and Kerry, can the HSE please outline the number of staff allocated to the new "Hub and Spoke" model in comparison with the previous community model, including their locations, and the extent of services to be provided to communities outside of the six core hubs."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Lynch thanked Management for the written reply and noted the contents of this response. Cllr Lynch asked whether there was a reduction in relation to the Community Drug Worker service provision in the Macroom area i.e. from 5 day provision to 1 day provision and expressed her concerns on this. Ms Jackie Daly, A/Chief Officer, advised that drug service provision is being developed and provided in accordance with service need and demands. The development of services was informed by the recommendations of the Murtagh Report. Ms Daly stated that she would revert to Cllr Lynch in regard to her queries on the timeline for the expansion of the service and on any plans for a review of the Hub & Spoke approach in 12-18 months.

7. Date and Time of next meeting – 24th of March 2022 at 2pm. Venue: The Oriel House Hotel, Ballincollig, Co Cork.

Members advised that they had a previously scheduled national AIG Conference on 24th March and therefore it was agreed that the Regional Health Forum Office would reschedule the proposed RHF March meeting and that notice would issue to Members in due course.