

MINUTES **MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

Thursday 17th September 2020 at 2pm
Webex Meeting

Present:

Cllr Pat Barden
Cllr Audrey Buckley
Cllr Declan Burgess
Cllr John Coonan
Cllr Pat Dunphy
Cllr Michael Gleeson
Cllr Pat Hayes
Cllr Willie Kavanagh
Cllr Niall Kelleher
Cllr Roger Kennedy
Cllr Mike Kennelly
Cllr Donal Kenny

Cllr Eileen Lynch
Cllr Susan McCarthy
Cllr Arthur McDonald
Cllr John McDonald
Cllr Conor McGuinness
Cllr Richie Molloy
Cllr Norma Moriarty
Cllr Brian O'Donoghue
Cllr John Sheehan
Cllr Mikey Sheehy
Cllr Ted Tynan

Apologies:

Cllr Pat Fitzgerald
Cllr Mary Linehan Foley
Cllr Michael McCarthy
Cllr Conor McGuinness
Cllr Jody Power
Cllr James Tobin

In Attendance:

Mr Gerry O'Dwyer, Chief Executive Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group
Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare
Dr Anne Sheehan, Director of Public Health, HSE South West
Dr Carmel Mullaney, Director of Public Health, HSE South East
Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 20th February 2020

On the proposal of Cllr John Coonan, seconded by Cllr Niall Kelleher, the Minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 20th February 2020 were approved and adopted by the members.

The Directors of Public Health (Dr Anne Sheehan for the South West and Dr Carmel Mullaney for the South East) provided public health updates on Covid-19 to Forum members. Both Directors outlined details for their respective areas in relation to Covid-19 cases, outbreaks, community testing and serial testing in residential settings and the expected increased Covid-19 activity over the Autumn and Winter months.

There were a number of questions from Regional Health Forum members. Cllr Mikey Sheehy asked about testing turnaround times and numbers of Covid patients in ICU in the hospital groups at present. Cllr John Coonan outlined the importance of local media to get messages across to people and communities. Cllr Niall Kelleher outlined the need for increased testing in the coming months with both Covid-19 and flu season.

In response to these queries, Mr. Michael Fitzgerald Chief Officer Cork Kerry Community Healthcare outlined the measures taking in the South West in relation to improved testing turnaround time and staff redeployment to testing.

Ms Kate Killeen White Chief Officer South East Community Healthcare also outlined to members the key response measures including scaling up of community testing to meet increased demand and winter proofing testing centres. Ms Killeen White advised on the ongoing serial testing activity and of pop-up test centres in response to specific needs. There is also a national recruitment campaign ongoing for community swabbing staff with the aim of facilitating staff returning to their substantive roles in line with service recovery planning. Both Mr. Fitzgerald and Ms. Killeen White expressed their gratitude to all staff involved in meeting testing demands. Cllr Michael Gleeson asked about the seasonal flu vaccine being made available free of charge. Michael Fitzgerald advised that a national announcement in relation to the overall flu vaccine initiative is expected shortly.

Mr. Gerry O'Dwyer CEO South/South West Hospital Group stated that the HSE Winter Plan and Covid-19 were very much present in media at this time. There were some specific queries in relation to the re-opening of schools and suspected cases which the Director of Public Health answered.

2. Chairperson's correspondence

Members were reminded to switch off mobile phones.

3. Committees

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

- (a) South East Committee Meeting held on 20th of October 2020
- (a) South West Committee Meeting held on 22nd of October 2020

5. Notices of Motion

(a) Cllr. Michael Gleeson moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That the HSE would inform if the expertise to perform the sometimes vitally important acute intervention of a Thrombectomy is available to appropriate patients within the Stroke Unit in University Hospital Kerry."

A written response from Mr Fearghal Grimes, General Manager, University Hospital Kerry was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Gleeson thanked HSE Management for this reply. He stated that there has been a long standing campaign for a stroke unit in University Hospital Kerry. With regard to stroke patients who require immediate care and are transferred from Kerry to specialist units, Cllr Gleeson hoped that these transfers take place promptly. Mr. O'Dwyer advised that stroke thrombectomy (the ability to remove a blood clot causing a stroke) is delivered in 2 sites nationally both of whom have the backup of neurosurgery services. To date all hospitals in South / South East have used Cork University Hospital or Beaumont Hospital who have excellent dedicated teams delivering these services. The Irish Examiner Book "Let's Talk Stroke Awareness" was also referenced a copy will be sent to Regional Health Forum Members.

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

"Patients in Dungarvan and its surrounding districts may be referred to hospitals in Waterford, Clonmel or Cork, and may come under the care of consultants and teams in one of several hospitals. This can present a difficulty for patients attending clinics at one hospital, who in an emergency are taken by ambulance to another hospital due to National Ambulance Service protocols. This can interrupt continuity of care and may often result in a patient being transferred from their emergency destination hospital to the hospital at which they have been receiving treatment.

What are the protocols with respect to identifying destination hospital for emergency ambulance calls?

Is the closest hospital with an emergency department indicated in all cases?

Can a patient or a patient's next-of-kin choose the destination hospital based on ongoing treatment at a particular hospital?

Is it possible for a GP or consultant to stipulate the preferred destination hospital for their patient in the event of an emergency?

Is there scope for flexibility and for informed decision making in the best interests of the patient, especially in situations where the difference in travel time between hospitals is a matter of minutes?" **Cllr Conor D. McGuinness**

This Motion has been deferred to the November 2020 Regional Health Forum Meeting.

(c) Cllr Mike Kennelly moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"Can HSE give an update when the out of Hours South Doc Services are restored to Listowel as these Services to the Listowel area are urgently needed."

A written response from Máire Hussey, General Manager, South Doc was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Kennelly was not entirely satisfied with the reply and stated that he still had queries on the matter. Michael Fitzgerald advised Cllr Kennelly that he will follow up on his particular queries and will arrange for a reply to issue to him.

(d) Cllr Mikey Sheehy moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That the HSE clarify what plans are in place to manage COVID during the winter period regarding capacity and, more specifically, if COVID numbers increase, how will elective services be managed in conjunction with emergency demands with regard to OPD waiting lists which increased due to curtailment during lockdown."

And

Q5 (f) Cllr Mikey Sheehy put forward the following Question:

"Do the HSE have plans to utilise the private sector to alleviate OPD waiting lists which have increased due to COVID19?"

A written response from Mr Gerry O'Dwyer, Chief Executive Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Sheehy thanked Mr O'Dwyer for his written reply. His concerns relate to the significant impact Covid-19 is having on outpatient appointments and elective surgeries and whether there were any plans to recruit additional staff and utilise private sector, national treatment purchase fund. Cllr Kennelly acknowledged the work undertaken in UHK in moving cancer patients as a protective measure.

Mr. O'Dwyer in response outlined the suite of measures and actions underway to improve acute hospital capacity. He outlined that there are plans to move a number of outpatient clinics off-site to other locations with the overall aim of decongesting hospitals. A consistent approach to the management of outpatient services is being taken across the Hospital Group. In some instances outpatient services are being relocated to primary care settings and other HSE Centres across the South West and South East.

Mr. O'Dwyer stated that the HSE is very mindful of those people waiting a long period of time and as a result are using both private hospitals and NTPF to seek to address this matter. He stated that the health service is working in a new environment and innovative approaches such as telemedicine are being expanded rapidly. Recruitment is ongoing to fill vacant posts and to improve services such as microbiology, disease management and infection control in hospitals.

(e) Cllr Norma Moriarty moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"That we ensure that an out of hours wound care/ wound dressing provision is in place in Iveragh as soon as possible."

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

Cllr. Moriarty thanked Mr. Fitzgerald for his detailed reply. She explained that the issue which led to her motion was a result of concern for an individual that took place over a weekend in relation to her wound and out of hours GP services and hospital accident and emergency services. Michael Fitzgerald requested that Cllr Moriarty submit further specific details on this case to him and he will follow up as appropriate. He advised that there are processes in place within the community for 'planned known cases'. If this was a new case then the right thing to do at the time was to seek medical attention. Cllr Niall Kelleher stated that he also knew of another case where a patient was a late discharge from hospital on a Friday evening and required a dressing over the weekend. Mr. Fitzgerald advised that there are arrangements in situ between hospital and community to facilitate discharge but at times there may be a timing issue with same. Mr.

Fitzgerald also asked Cllr Kelleher to forward these specific details and he will look into the matter further.

(f) Cllr Jody Power moved the following motion, standing in his name:

"Despite assurances given that all Covid-19 testing would be completed within 48 hours at our last South East Committee meeting in Kilkenny, St Carthage's Nursing home in Lismore Co. Waterford was left waiting for over 5 days for results. This caused added distress for the staff, residents and anxious relatives of the nursing home which required a lock-down situation to be re-imposed for this extended period. In this light, I request that the HSE present this meeting with the actual statistics for test completed within the targeted 48 hour over the last 2 months and the complete picture of time taken for all test results completed over this period."

This Motion has been deferred to the November 2020 Regional Health Forum Meeting.

(g) Cllr Eileen Lynch moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"Can the HSE South please outline as to whether all Adult Disability Day Services in Cork have resumed as planned and as to what level of service they are currently providing in comparison to pre-Covid levels of support, and when it is expected that full service will resume."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Lynch thanked Mr. Fitzgerald for his reply. She was pleased to see that some services had recommenced since August and stated that it was a matter of priority for all day services to resume. She asked whether the re-opening of day service is under continuous review and whether there would be additional funding (other than €1.5m allocated nationally for Computer, Technology Communications) allocated to assist day service providers with actions required in relation to Covid-19? Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the phased recommencement of day services was challenging in the context of Covid-19. For the safety of service users and our staff that support them, the resumption of day service supports should be approached with extreme caution and must be underpinned by continued national guidance. The HSE is very concerned about loss of services to individuals. The HSE is continuing to review day service provision on a regular basis and is actively engaged with service providers and particularly in supporting them to utilise resources to maximise service user supports. The overall aim is to try and get as many day services operational in a safe manner.

6. Questions

(a) Cllr. Michael Gleeson put forward the following question:

"As Arthritis in any of its various forms can be a very debilitating and expensive condition for individuals of any age category, to ask the HSE Forum South if an individual sufferer is automatically entitled to a full Medical Card?"

A written response from Kieran Healy, Head of Customer Service, Primary Care Eligibility & Reimbursement Service (PCERS) was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Gleeson outlined that he had met with someone who had chronic arthritis who was unable to get a medical card. Mr. Fitzgerald advised that local community services do not decide on or approve medical card applications. This is managed centrally by the National Primary Care Reimbursement Service. There is a standard application process for medical cards with explicit criteria in relation to an individual's income and expenses.

Although a chronic condition the diagnosis of arthritis does mean a person is automatically entitled to a medical card per se.

(b) Cllr. Declan Burgess put forward the following question:

"Can I please get an update on the HSE's Capital Plan to construct a new 60 bed Residential Centre (to replace the St. Anne's/St. Bernadette's/St. Benedict's wards) on a site adjacent to St. Patrick's Hospital in Cashel"

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Burgess thanked Ms. Killeen White for her reply and stated that he hoped that the planning issues can be progressed. He advised that he would keep this matter on the agenda.

(c) Cllr. John Sheehan put forward the following question:

"Given the importance of a strong co-ordinated unified health service especially during the Covid 19 Pandemic, can the HSE outline what plans are in place with regard to the development of the Primary Care Units? Are they to be continued and if so how is their role to be defined?" A discussion was held in the chambers.

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald and Ms Kate Killeen White was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Sheehan thanked HSE Management for their reply and also congratulated Mr. Fitzgerald on his new role as Chief Officer for Cork Kerry Community Healthcare. Mr. Fitzgerald advised members on the importance of GPs in relation to the Community Health Networks and population health.

(d) Cllr. Conor McGuinness put forward the following question:

"Many full-time and retained firefighters have undertaken first responder training. Will the HSE engage with local authority fire services with regard to the latter providing First Responder services in their locality? Could local authority fire services be covered under the National First Responder Network scheme for training, deployment and insurance purposes?"

This Motion has been deferred to the November 2020 Regional Health Forum Meeting.

(e) Cllr. Mike Kennelly put forward the following question:

"When will the New Primary Care Centre in Listowel be officially opened to the Public and will all services be available."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Kennelly asked for a specific timeline for the new Primary Care Centre to be opened and particularly in relation to Winter 2020. Mr. Fitzgerald responded stating that unfortunately he cannot give a definite guarantee at this time but confirmed that the Unit is progressing in a planned manner.

(g) Cllr. Norma Moriarty put forward the following question:

"Can we have an update on a reopening date for day services for the elderly at Cahersiveen Community Hospital and that the required staff be approved and sourced if necessary to provide this vital service."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Moriarty thanked Mr. Fitzgerald for the reply. She stated that the lack of day services was having a significant impact on service users and their families. People are deteriorating and families are under pressure. Cllr Moriarty asked when the review of day services would be completed and what timeframe can we expect services to recommence. Mr. Fitzgerald replied stating that the review is in relation to the readiness of day centres to re-open and what they specifically need to do to facilitate that re-opening. Mr. Fitzgerald re-iterated that any planned service resumption for Day Services for Older People will be completely dependent on Covid-19 activity and taking account of prevailing public health and infection control guidance. The key priority must be the safety of our service users, their families and our staff. Ms. Kate Killeen White agreed with Mr. Fitzgerald stating that Services for Older People are working really hard to ensure safe service delivery. We are risk assessing our services and must ensure that any action in relation to service resumption does in itself not generate further risks.

(h) Cllr. Eileen Lynch put forward the following question:

“Can the HSE advise as to when Breast Check Services will resume and as to whether extra tests and necessary resources will be made available to compensate for the fact that tests have been stopped since March.”

A written response from Dr. Alissa Connors, Clinical Director, BreastCheck was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Lynch thanked HSE Management for this comprehensive reply and whilst she fully acknowledged the difficulties in service resumption, it would be critical for them to do so as soon as possible.

7. Date and Time of next meeting – 19th of November 2020, at 2pm.

The members thanked the HSE Managers in Community and Acute for their contributions to the Forum and for their continued hard work under such exceptionally difficult circumstances. The members also expressed their gratitude to Annette O’Connell for her continued supports with the Regional Health Forum.