

## **MINUTES** **MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 2pm**  
**Webex Meeting**

### **Present:**

Clr Audrey Buckley  
Clr Declan Burgess  
Clr Peter Cleere  
Clr Danny Collins  
Clr John Coonan  
Clr Pat Dunphy  
Clr Pat Fitzgerald  
Clr Michael Gleeson  
Clr Pat Hayes  
Clr Roger Kennedy  
Clr Mike Kennelly  
Clr Donal Kenny  
Clr Eileen Lynch  
Clr Michael McCarthy

Clr Susan McCarthy  
Clr Arthur McDonald  
Clr John McDonald  
Clr Conor McGuinness  
Clr Richie Molloy  
Clr Norma Moriarty  
Clr Brian O'Donoghue  
Clr Ken O'Flynn  
Clr Jody Power  
Clr John Sheehan  
Clr Mikey Sheehy  
Clr James Tobin

### **Apologies:**

Clr Mary Linehan Foley

### **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 Health Organisation  
Dr Orla Healy, A/ Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group  
Mr Nicky Glynn, Area Operations Manager, National Ambulance Service  
Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

## **1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

On the proposal of Cllr John Coonan, seconded by Cllr Danny Collins, the minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 were approved and adopted by the members.

## **2. Chairperson's correspondence**

Discussion on AGMs

## **3. Committees**

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

- (a) South East Committee Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020
- (a) South West Committee Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2020

## **5. Notices of Motion**

(a) 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?"

A written response from Mr Martin Dunne, Director, National Ambulance Service was circulated to members and noted.

In addition Mr Nicky Glynn Area Operations Manager, National Ambulance Service who was in attendance advised that in general ambulances operate on 999 time critical basis and will always go to nearest appropriate Emergency Department (ED). It does not matter whether the patient may already be under the care of a Consultant in a different hospital - the ambulance will be directed towards the nearest appropriate ED. At times if certain required diagnostics are not available nearby, it may then be necessary for the ambulance to bypass the nearest ED and head towards a specialist centre.

(b) 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."

A written response was provided by Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Committee Healthcare who advised that it was not appropriate to comment on individual cases, she did outline in general the process in relation to serial testing and notification of results including factors which may impact on turnaround times.

Cllr James Tobin advised the members that he is the Chairperson of the Board of Management of St Carthage's Supported Care Home. He had checked Cllr Power's query with the Director of Nursing who confirmed to him that this was not true.

Cllr Power replied stating that he would write directly to Cllr Tobin in relation to the matter with further information on this issue.

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

"That HSE Forum South would give an update on the Dental service in County Kerry and clarify if it has returned to providing a full service to schools and to entitled members of the public. That the Forum would further inform the members of the extent of the waiting lists for both levels of this very vital service."

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

Cllr Gleeson thanked Mr Fitzgerald for this reply. He asked why the service was still operating at reduced capacity if all staff members had returned to their substantive roles. Mr. Fitzgerald clarified that not all dental staff members have returned to their roles as yet. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare similar to other areas are in the process of recruiting Community Testing Swabbers who once recruited and trained would facilitate the return of redeployed staff to their roles. Mr. Fitzgerald also stated that with the Covid-19 public health emergency, there have been increased demands for testing in residential services and there is a requirement to ensure appropriate measures are in place as a priority to respond accordingly - this in turn has implications for redeployed staff. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that with staff returning to their substantive roles and planning for service recovery, there will also be a waiting list initiative implemented to focus on dental waiting lists.

(d) Cllr Roger Kennedy moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"To ask the HSE to give timeline for the provision of the 30 additional beds for acute care in St Michael's unit at South Tipperary General Hospital."

A written response from Ms Maria Barry, General Manager, South Tipperary General Hospital was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Kennedy asked whether the contract has been awarded for external works and if the contractor was employed for internal works. Dr Orla Healy responded to the query in relation to the timeline advising that she had liaised with HSE Estates who have advised that it is expected that these beds should be open between April and June 2021.

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

"That this Forum supports my call for the South/South West hospital group and the HSE to address the extremely worrying 'routine' waiting list at UHK for rheumatology as a matter of urgency. This waiting list is one of many OPD lists that have expanded and increased over time with the COVID19 pandemic adding to the strain on current resources. All supports and resources that can be possibly be utilised should be explored."

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

Both Cllr Sheehy and then Cllr Moriarty raised questions in relation to this matter. Cllr Sheehy asked about where in the recruitment process was the additional staff nurse post - had it progressed to interview stage? It was understood that the current Consultant is intending on leaving in January 2021. Cllr Sheehy was concerned as what was hoped to be an expanded service is now apparently at a standstill. Cllr Moriarty supported Cllr Sheehy stating that measures were needed which required all relevant personnel co-ordinating efforts to recruit the necessary staff.

Dr Orla Healy stated that all waiting lists in all services are being significantly impacted by Covid-19. Measures are being implemented with the aim of addressing the build-up of waiting lists including virtual clinics, outsourcing to private providers via National Treatment Purchase Fund. With regard to the posts as referenced in the Motion, Dr Healy advised that the HSE Recruitment is progressing these appointments and we are not privy to the outcome of interviews at this time. The Advanced Nurse Practitioner Post is currently with the National Recruitment Service at this time. With regard to the resignation of the Locum Consultant, the HSE has already been in contact with recruitment service to commence the recruitment of a replacement post which is standard process. In the meantime the HSE will continue to support the service as best as possible.

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

"Can the HSE advise as to when public health Paediatric Physiotherapy appointments in the Cork Kerry Region will resume having ceased at the commencement of Level 5 due to redeployment of service providers without notice to services users."

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

Cllr. Lynch thanked Mr Fitzgerald for his reply, and asked further in terms of a timeframe for service resumption. Mr Fitzgerald responded stating that the services have not completely stopped at any stage and continues to use a number of measures including telehealth where appropriate and where face to face contact may not be possible. We very much want and support a return to full service resumption. At this time service resumption is around 80% of pre-covid activity levels. Assuming that the current level of swabbing is required, taking into account Covid activity levels and staff recruitment, it is hoped to restore services fully in the near future. However, that said, Mr Fitzgerald stated that we must be cognisant that there are caveats and barriers to service resumption and particularly given the uncertainty around Covid-19.

Cllr Lynch asked Mr Fitzgerald what he meant when he referenced pre-covid activity – he clarified that this referred to pre-March 2020.

Cllr Mikey Sheehy also indicated his support for this Motion.

## 6. Questions

(a) 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?"

A written response from Mr Martin Dunne, Director, National Ambulance Service was circulated to members and noted.

In addition Mr Nicky Glynn Area Operations Manager, National Ambulance Service who was in attendance responded to Cllr Lenihan and stated that the ambulance service would be supportive of any community based first responder programme.

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

"Would the HSE please inform if it has given any further consideration to my request at the February 2020 Forum meeting to accept responsibility for the payment of the Salaries of the two [2] additional Motor Neuron Nurses who are at present funded from money raised by charitable pursuits? Raising money in such a manner has of course now become almost impossible because of Corona Virus restrictions."

A written response from Ms Carol Ivory, Office of the National Director, Acute Operations, HSE was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Gleeson requested a vote of sympathy for a constituent's son who passed away the previous day. Dr Orla Healy outlined that Beaumont Hospital is outside the jurisdiction of the Hospital Group. She stated that funding had been provided towards 2 Motor Neuron Nurses last year with no further requests received thereafter. Cllr Gleeson advised he would follow up on a formal funding request report which will be considered by the HSE once received.

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

"Can the HSE please provide an update on the Jigsaw project commencement and establishment in Tipperary?"

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 the reply. He noted that the Jigsaw Project was recently raised in the Dail. Cllr Burgess asked Ms Killeen White whether she had any further information on the service commencement timeline and the exact location of the premises for the new Jigsaw Project in Tipperary. Ms Killeen White welcomed the development of a Jigsaw Project for Tipperary. She outlined that with commercial sensitivities and that it may not be possible to provide this specific information at this time. However Ms Killeen White indicated that she would revert to Cllr Burgess with an update once available.

(d) Cllr. John McDonald put forward the following question:

Can you please provide an update on the site for the Primary Care Centre, Tullow."

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White was circulated to members and noted. Cllr McDonald acknowledged the reply and asked whether the HSE has confirmed the location of the site as yet. Ms Killeen White advised that she would arrange to revert to Cllr McDonald with an update once the formal Expression of Interest process had been completed.

(e) Cllr. Roger Kennedy put forward the following question:

To request that the members be given a date when St Brigid's Hospital Carrick on Suir will reopen, now that Covid-19 numbers are in decline. This hospital provided much needed step down facilities and palliative care beds and was a vital service for Carrick on Suir and its hinterland."

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Kennedy noted the reply and thanked Ms Killeen White whilst noting there was no assurance given that services would resume at St. Brigid's Hospital.

Ms Killeen White advised that the HSE is engaged in service recovery and as part of this must consider all services including Services for Older People in this emerging Covid environment. The HSE is required to implement and support infection, prevention and control measures in order to manage this highly infectious disease and maintain our services as safe places. Public health and infection control guidance along with social distancing requirements are impacting on how we deliver services, particularly in both short stay and residential services. Ms Killeen White gave examples of necessary measures in Waterford Residential Care Unit and the transfer of residents from St Patrick's Hospital Cashel to Our Lady's Building. The HSE / SECH has utilised the staffing resource from St. Brigid's to meet demands these locations and in community healthcare services.

Cllr Kennedy asked when St Brigid's staff would return to their roles as he was concerned if the hospital continues to remain unused at this time. Ms Killeen White replied stating that that staff would be informed first and foremost regarding developments with St. Brigid's and that it is important to preserve the integrity of staff engagement.

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

"Have management at UHK initiated an independent exit questionnaire across all hospital services for staff leaving the HSE, transferring within the HSE and retiring? If UHK management have not initiated such an independent review will they do so now?"

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

Cllr Sheehy stated he was not satisfied with the written reply. He acknowledged that it is accepted that there would be a turnover of staff at any big hospital. However he was particularly concerned with the Consultant Rheumatologist post and levels of staff turnover and staff resignation. Dr Orla Healy in reply stated that at times there can be a self-defeating narrative with negative messaging in the public domain. Dr Healy has looked at nursing turnover – it is normal for a number of reasons including young nurses may leave to go travelling, people may leave for promotion purposes and retirements.

Dr Healy also stated that Oireachtas members have been critical of the HSE hiring outside private agencies including private Human Resources companies.

The Rheumatology Consultant was a locum position and the position holder will be given an opportunity to provide feedback as he exits the post. Cllr Sheehy stated that standard practice in this regard by the HSE was not best practice in his view. He urged a review of this with a view to outsourcing the function of exit interviews to external HR companies for absolute honesty and anonymity from exiting staff all with a view to improving the retention rates within the service.

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

"Can the HSE please provide clarification and timeline as to when a new GP will be allocated to Macroom town, Co Cork. There are currently four surgeries in the town which are serviced by 6 GP's. Since the retirement of one GP in September 2019, one of those four surgeries has been ran continuously by locum/agency GP's without a permanent GP being appointed. Can the HSE outline what measures are currently being taken to appoint a permanent GP. This has led to a situation whereby no surgery in the town is currently taking on patients and with the construction of upwards of 100 Social Houses to be completed in the town in the first quarter of 2021; there are no medical services available to any new residents."

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

Cllr Lynch thanked Mr Fitzgerald for the reply - she outlined her concerns regarding GP recruitment and particularly the apparent reactive approach by the HSE in relation to the recruitment and retention of GPs.

Mr Fitzgerald agreed that the recruitment of GPs (who are outside contractors) is a broader issue experienced by the HSE in general and that it is a concern. The HSE continues to work nationally on a number of initiatives including the new GP contract, which considers changes in the way GPs are working. The current Covid arrangements and screening with GPs may continue in a post Covid environment.

Cllr McDonald asked whether it is possible to increase the number of GP practices? Mr Fitzgerald replied stating that work is ongoing to consolidate GP practices as opposed to the development of individual single handed practices. There are benefits to team practices working in partnership including IT and administration arrangements. Single handed practices will find it increasingly difficult to operate a model into the future. The HSE will continue to work with the relevant stakeholders to increase recruitment and retention of GPs.

(h) Cllr. Jody Power put forward the following question:

"That HSE SSWHG instigate forthwith a communication protocol in all hospitals to ensure that when a patient test results are produced that they are recorded at the hospital and communicated to all professionals in that patients care plan, in a reasonable timeframe. The communication process must include check and fail-safe process to ensure full and timely compliance"

A written response from Dr Orla Healy, A/Chief Operations Officer was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Power stated that he was not satisfied with this reply and quoted a case from the newspaper to highlight his issues. Dr Healy stated that the written response stands and that it would not be appropriate to discuss individual cases in this Forum. Dr Healy

confirmed that there are processes in place for communications to GPs following hospital discharge. Cllr Power stated that the case he quoted outlined evidence provided in a Public Court. Dr Healy reiterated that she was not in a position to discuss individual cases in this Forum and to reply further to this.

7. Date and Time of next meeting – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021, at 2pm.