

MINUTES **MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

Thursday, 1st May 2025 at 11am

Venue: Council Chambers, Cork County Council, County Hall, Cork

Present:

Cllr Ann Marie Ahern **Chairperson**
Cllr Ann Bambury
Cllr Declan Barry
Cllr Liam Brazil *
Cllr Tomas Breathnach
Cllr Fergal Browne*
Cllr Danny Collins
Cllr Pat Dunphy
Cllr Deirdre Ferris*
Cllr Dominic Finn
Cllr John Fleming
Cllr Ger Frisby
Cllr Finbarr Harrington
Cllr Jackie Healy Rae *
Cllr Peter Horgan
Cllr Roger Kennedy *

Cllr Fiona Kerins *
Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley
Cllr Margaret McDonnell
Cllr Norma Moriarty *
Cllr Marie Murphy *
Cllr John O'Leary
Cllr Tony O'Shea *
Cllr Daniel Pender *
Cllr John Sheehan
Cllr Mikey Sheehy *
Cllr Michael Smith
Cllr Frank Staples
Cllr Joe Sullivan
Cllr Adrienne Wallace*
Cllr Adam Wyse

*** attended online**

Apologies:

Cllr John Coonan
Cllr John Pratt
Cllr Marie Moloney

In Attendance:

- Ms Priscilla Lynch, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Cork South and West
- Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East*
- Ms Sinead Reynolds, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford, HSE Dublin and South East*
- Mr Jonthan Hoare, Director of Communication and Public Affairs, HSE South West HSE South West
- Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

Cllr Ann Marie Ahern, Chairperson, opened the meeting welcomed both members and HSE Management.

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 27th

On the proposal of Cllr Finbarr Harrington seconded by Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley the minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 27th March 2025 were approved and adopted by the members.

2. Chairperson's Correspondence

Cllr Ahern informed the members that she received correspondence from Minister Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, Minister for Health, dated 30th April 2025. This correspondence was in response to a letter written by Cllr Ahern to the Minister arising from Motion 4(h) tabled by Cllr Mikey Sheehy. This motion looked for the introduction of legislation to ban the use of vaping products (e-cigarettes) in indoor public spaces, workplaces, and other designated areas. Cllr Sheehy stated that he was very disappointed with the response from the Minister and requested that the Regional Health Forum Chairperson and members write back to the Minister and request action. Cllr Ahern shared in Cllr Sheehy's disappointment and agreed that a further letter should be written to the Minister. This was strongly supported by the members in the Chambers with Cllr Sheehan stating that Ireland has been a world leader in terms of action on Tobacco and Tobacco use and a similar approach is needed on vaping as more and more evidence comes out on the harmful effects of vaping. A number of other members spoke to support the motion.

3. Committees

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

- (a)** South East Committee Meeting held on 7th October 2025 in Kilkenny
- (b)** South West Committee Meeting held on 9th October 2025 in Tralee

4. Notices of Motion

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

"That the HSE provide an update on the Primary Care Centre for Youghal and a timeline on same."

A written response from Ms Sonya Cotter, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Cork North and East, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Lenihan Foley stated that she was happy with the response and requested that she is updated on the progress on this project as it progresses.

(b) Cllr Ann Bambury moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"How many community hospital beds are available in Cork County for long-term stay patients? How many people are currently awaiting the fair deal scheme in Cork County? And how many people are availing of the fair deal scheme in Cork County? Lastly, what is the bed capacity across Cork County between both private nursing homes and HSE community hospitals for long-term care?"

A written response from Ms Sonya Cotter, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Cork North and East, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Bambury thanked

HSE Management for the response. Although Bandon Community Hospital is a fantastic new build serving the Bandon community she requested that the HSE look again at the number of beds in the hospital with the increasing need for these beds in the area. Ms Priscilla Lynch informed members that there is notable increases in the aging population in Cork and Kerry. The HSE have carried out predicative analysis from now to 2030 on services required by older persons and providing those services as close to home as possible. The Public Health Department, HSE South West providing statistics to assist in the plan to provide bed types required into the future.

(c) Cllr Peter Horgan moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That this Forum urges the HSE and hospitals within the Cork area to frontload efforts to hire radiation therapists especially in order to open the closed linear accelerator and CT Scanner in Cork University Hospital."

A written response from Ms Priscilla Lynch, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Cork South and West, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Horgan thanked Ms Lynch for the comprehensive response and noted the deficit of WTEs in the area. In terms of the external recruitment agency Cllr Horgan asked what the costs and success rates were associated with this recruitment agency. Ms Lynch said she would come back to Cllr Horgan with those details and stated that the system involved a finder's fee with payments made as successful candidates are recruited.

(d) Cllr Dominic Finn moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"Could the HSE address the issue where GP Practices have no referral pathway available for GP's to access Radiological Investigations for children patients who have Medical / GP Visit Cards."

A written response from Ms Priscilla Lynch, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Cork South and West, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Finn thanked HSE Management for the response and requested a timeline involved and Ms Lynch explained that work is currently underway but information on this is not available yet.

(e) Cllr Danny Collins moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"I am requesting that the HSE would employ a full time clinical specialist podiatrist in West Cork as part of a preventative strategy in chronic disease management so this would be in line with the N.I.C.E. Guidelines and the International working group of the Diabetic Foot and The National wound care strategy programme in the UK."

A written response from Ms Priscilla Lynch, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Cork South and West, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Collins noted that a Podiatrist comes once a week to West Cork but more is required as a preventative strategy for the area. Ms Lynch explained that a previous recruitment drive proved unsuccessful in securing a person in this role. Approval has been granted to re advertise this post, and a campaign is anticipated to occur soon. Cllr Collins asked for a time line on this campaign, Ms Lynch said she would come back to him with this.

(f) Cllr Deirdre Ferris moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"That this Forum requests an update on the publication of the North Kerry CAMHS Review."

A written response from Ms Julie O'Neill, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Kerry, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Ferris stated that she felt that the children and families have been let down as they wait for this review to be completed. Ms Lynch agreed that it was very disappointing that the children and families continue to wait for the publication of this review. Initially, it was hoped that the review would be completed quickly. However, Dr. Colette Halpin and her team of consultants realised that a thorough and robust review would take longer. The priority was to ensure that every young person's file received a consistent and detailed review. Cllr Ferris requested a date for this publication and Ms Lynch said she link in with the External Review Team and relay Cllr Ferris's concerns as well as Forum members concerns and revert when a definitive time of publication is available.

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

"That the HSE investigate the feasibility of providing nursing, Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP), or physiotherapy support—potentially in partnership with MTU Tralee—on-site at the hydrotherapy pool located on the university campus. This facility, which is already equipped with hoist access, presents a valuable opportunity to expand its use in supporting individuals with mobility challenges, whether in rehabilitation or as part of ongoing mobility-focused programmes"

A written response from Ms Julie O'Neill, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Kerry, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Sheehy welcomed the initiatives in place but encouraged the HSE to make further use of the facility and that it could stretch wider and be used further for the rehabilitation of those with mobility challenges. Ms Lynch explained that a targeted initiative will be commencing at the end of May 2025. The Community Healthcare Network 2 (CHN2) Physiotherapist will facilitate a pool-based rehabilitation programme at MTU specifically for suitable musculoskeletal (MSK) clients who are currently on the Outpatient Department (OPD) waiting list.

This programme will be delivered in a small group format and will focus on engaging patients in aquatic exercise and improving balance. The primary objective is to build participants' confidence in using the pool environment for rehabilitation and to support them in managing ongoing or chronic MSK conditions independently over time.

5. Questions

(a) Cllr Ann Bambury put forward the following question:

"How many home care hours are being contracted to private home care companies by the HSE, and how many are provided by HSE-contracted HCSAs? Also, how many older people currently qualify for home care assistance?"

A written response from Ms Sonya Cotter, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Cork North and East, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Bambury welcomed the detailed response and stated that she had an interest in Older People Services and the recruitment side of HCSAs. She thought having a 3 over 5 working schedule as well as 5

over 7 would be a big incentive to recruit HCSAs as this allowed for a greater time for family alongside work. Male carers are becoming very popular and which is very much needed. Ms Lynch stated that self-scheduling is being introduced which would allow more flexibility. Initiatives underway in the HSE South West region to counter capacity issues in the home support sector include the appointment of two dedicated recruitment coordinators for Health Care Assistants (Home Support) with campaigns running throughout the year. The most recent recruitment campaign for HCSAs was undertaken earlier this year which, following screening and interview, has identified 86 potential candidates for Cork and Kerry positions pending completion of recruitment checks.

(b) Cllr Roger Kennedy put forward the following question:

"What is the current wait time for a first-time chemotherapy appointment, from time of decision/consent to treat in all hospitals in the HSE Dublin and South East health region? What are the plans to reduce wait times in each of the relevant hospitals?"

A written response from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Kennedy thanked HSE Management for the very detailed response. Ms Reynolds updated members on the KPIs of the hospitals involved in HSE Dublin and South East.

(c) Cllr Peter Horgan put forward the following question:

"Following on from the publication of the HSE capital plan, which is welcome, I seek in tabular form the number of staff by grade required to fulfil the operations in totality of each new project in the Cork area."

And

(d) Cllr John Pratt put forward the following question:

"Following on from the publication of the HSE capital plan, which is welcome, I seek in tabular form the number of staff by grade required to fulfil the operations in totality of each new project in the Waterford area."

These two questions were responded to together with a written response from Mr Daniel Clifford, Director of Estates, HSE South West and Ms Dorota Nieznanska, Director of Estates, HSE South East circulated to members and noted. Cllr Horgan stated that he was a little disappointed in the response he thought that general WTE requirements should be made available when a project is put forward for the capital planning to ensure these facilities are staffed efficiently. Ms Lynch stated that this information is included in each capital plan submission but there are caveats involved including length of time for projects as well as others. Ms Roseanne Killeen stated that there were 250 new staff as a result of Capital projects and it is very important to have staffing in place to open new builds. Figures are included at the initial stages of a planning submission and can change over the duration of a project so this needs reviews and changes throughout the life time of a project from start to finish.

(e) Cllr Danny Collins put forward the following question:

"Are the HSE looking at opening extra respite beds in Older Persons Services in the West Cork area as at the moment there is a massive need for them."

A written response from Ms Priscilla Lynch, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Cork South and West, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Collins stated that the need for these dedicated respite beds was clear in the area. He said Nursing Homes are not inclined to provide respite beds when they can fill them long term. Ms Lynch said, as she had to Cllr Bambury, that work was being carried out with the Department of Public Health to determine the requirement for Older People into the future and this included the need for respite beds and this would determine how much more capacity would be required for the region.

(f) Cllr Deirdre Ferris put forward the following question:

"Have the HSE had any requests for a meeting with representatives of the families of St Francis' School since our last meeting and if so, can the members be informed of any updates or plans?"

A written response from Ms Julie O'Neill, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Kerry, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Ferris acknowledged the response and stated that she felt that this did not reflect a previous discussion at a Committee meeting held the previous month. Ms Lynch's understanding of the situation is that discussions had taken place on this but Ms Lynch said that she would ask the Head of Disabilities to liaise with Cllr Ferris as follow up on this to clarify the situation.

(g) Cllr Pat Dunphy put forward the following question:

"I am seeking clarification regarding the recent announcement about the introduction of 24/7 cardiac care services in University Hospital Waterford. Could you confirm if this announcement is accurate, and if so, provide details on the expected timeline for when the service will be fully operational?"

A written response from Ms Sinead Reynolds, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Dunphy acknowledged the response and requested that the Regional Health Forum members be kept up-to-date with the progress of 24/7 Cardiac care services. Ms Reynolds assured Cllr Dunphy that she would endeavour to keep RHF members up-to-date on this matter which is so important to all of the South East members.

6. Date and Time of next meeting – 5th of June 2025 at 11am. Venue: Council Chambers, Cork County Council, County Hall, Cork