

MINUTES **MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

Thursday, 19th September 2024 at 11am
Venue: Meeting Room, Floor 16, County Hall, Cork

Present:

Cllr Ann Marie Ahern	Chairperson	Cllr Roger Kennedy
Cllr Declan Barry		Cllr Fiona Kerins*
Cllr Liam Brazil		Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley
Cllr Fergal Browne*		Cllr Margaret McDonnell
Cllr Cathal Byrne*		Cllr Marie Moloney
Cllr Danny Collins*		Cllr Norma Moriarty
Cllr John Coonan		Cllr Marie Murphy
Cllr Caroline Cronin		Cllr John O'Leary
Cllr David Dunne		Cllr Tony O'Shea*
Cllr Pat Dunphy		Cllr Daniel Pender
Cllr Deirdre Ferris*		Cllr Liam Quaide*
Cllr Dominic Finn		Cllr John Sheehan*
Cllr John Fleming		Cllr Mikey Sheehy
Cllr Ger Frisby		Cllr Michael Smith
Cllr Damian Geoghegan		Cllr Frank Staples
Cllr Finbarr Harrington		Cllr Joe Sullivan
Cllr Pat Hayes	Vice Chairperson	Cllr Adrienne Wallace*
Cllr Jackie Healy-Rae*		Cllr Adam Wyse
Cllr Peter Horgan		

*** attended online**

In Attendance:

Ms Bridie O'Sullivan, Director of Nursing, South/South West Hospitals Group
Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
Ms Michelle Doyle, A/Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare
Ms Eithne Mullen, Director of Strategy, Transformation & Improvement, Ireland East Hospital Group*
Mr Gearoid Rennicks, Senior Press Officer, Ireland East Hospital Group*
Dr Anne Sheahan, Area Director of Public Health, HSE South West
Ms Mairéad Fennessy, Communications, South East Community Healthcare
Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

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

Vote of Sympathy for our colleague Deirdre Meredith who sadly passed away on 27th August 2024. Deirdre worked in recent years with the Office of Head of Service/Primary Care, HSE/South East Community Healthcare. She provided support and assistance with queries from Regional Health Forum and Oireachtas members. Deirdre's courtesy and professionalism in her work was appreciated by all and she will be greatly missed. We extend our sympathies to Deirdre's husband (and our colleague in HSE Superannuation/South East) Mark Finnegan, their children, her parents, siblings and extended family and friends. May Deirdre Rest in Peace.

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 18th July 2024

On the proposal of Cllr Coonan seconded by Cllr Horgan, the minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 18th July 2024 were approved and adopted by the members.

2. Chairperson's Correspondence

3. Committees

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

- (a)** South East Committee Meeting held on 8th October 2024 in Kilkenny
- (b)** South West Committee Meeting held on 10th October 2024 in Tralee

4. Notices of Motion

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

"Can we have full update on the Primary Care Unit in Youghal and how far it has progressed."

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

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

"Do the HSE have any further plans to develop primary care centres in Tralee and what is the current update for the delivery of a minor injuries unit for Kerry."

This was taken with Motions 4(e) and 4(h) as follows:

(e) Cllr Jackie Healy Rae moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That the HSE would seek to set up minor injury clinics throughout the county of Kerry, this would in turn relieve the pressure that is currently on our A&E unit in UHK."

(h) Cllr Marie Moloney moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"That the HSE would locate a minor injuries clinic in Killarney."

A written response from Dr Gerard O'Callaghan, Chief Operations Officer, South\South West Hospital Group and Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Jackie Healy Rae noted reply advising that a Minor Injury Clinic (MIU) development is aligned to the HSE Capital Plan 2024. He asked what services would be delivered by the MIU once operational.

Cllr Moloney thanked HSE Management for the reply and welcomed confirmation that the new development would be progressed in Killarney.

Ms Bridie O'Sullivan South/South West Hospital Group stated that from an acute hospital perspective MIUs are welcome developments as the HSE moves to develop alternate pathways and for people to be able to access services and care where appropriate in their local area for a range of injuries thereby enabling A&E staff to concentrate on people with serious and life threatening conditions. This development of Minor Injury Units are in line with Sláintecare.

(c) Cllr Fergal Browne moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"Could the HSE clearly outline status and timelines for development of site at Kelvin Grove Athy Road Carlow?"

A written response from Ms Michelle Doyle, A/Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Browne noted that this matter has been going on for a considerable time with little progress to date. Ms Doyle advised Cllr Browne that she would liaise with HSE Estates in relation to any further update on proposed developments at Kelvingrove and once available would arrange to forward to the Councillor.

(d) Cllr Cathal Byrne moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"To ask the HSE to give an update on the 97 bed extension for Wexford General Hospital and whether it has any further capital development works planned for Wexford General Hospital."

A written response from Ms Linda O'Leary, General Manager, Wexford General Hospital was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Byrne thanked HSE Management for this reply and acknowledged the ongoing work in progressing this significant hospital development.

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

"That this forum supports the need to regularise and equalise pay and pension conditions for all workers operating in the CDNT ecosystem with their counterparts in primary care to ensure equal parity in pay and pension rights to support recruitment and retention and will write to the Taoiseach and All ministers of the Government on this matter."

A written response from Ms Michelle Doyle, A/Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare and Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, South West Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Horgan stated that this was a serious matter given the vacancy rate in CDNTs across the Cork / Kerry area. Tess O'Donovan Chief Officer stated that there are challenges in

recruitment right across the health system. With regard to Disability Services in Cork and Kerry, she clarified that the Lead Agencies who provide services on behalf of the HSE are responsible for the ongoing recruitment to the CDNTs. There is agreement nationally for these Section 38/39 agencies to use HSE Panels which should ease some of these recruitment challenges. Any offer of employment and pay and conditions are under the auspices of the Lead Agency. Ms O'Donovan acknowledged that there is a need for fully staffed CDNTs to address increasing service demand and waiting lists. Every effort is being made to recruit staff to vacant posts including recruitment abroad initiatives.

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

"When it comes to securing housing for people with Intellectual Disabilities the current policy/protocol by the HSE inhibits houses being made available for this purpose as it insists that no members of a family that wish to provide a house for multiple occupancy are to be allowed to continue to live there. This has resulted in the loss of two such homes in Kerry alone in the last year for a sector that desperately needs this accommodation. My question/motion is why allow an overly stringent protocol to continue when surely a case by case examination of what is feasible could result in more units being made available?"

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, South West Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Moriarty stated that she had been invited to attend a meeting of Intellectual Disability Service Providers and a Family in Kerry. The family are very willing to offer their home as housing for disability clients - however it is understood they could not do so because of legal obligations and protections. Families whose children are now adults wish to make accommodation available in an effort to bring additional residential houses into use having regard for the high demand for residential places which exceeds availability of same. Cllr Moriarty asked whether the HSE is being overly cautious on this.

Ms Tess O'Donovan stated that the offer of housing for the provision of residential services is reviewed on an individual basis with the relevant person/family. In addition to considerable legal obligations, there are other requirements to consider including safeguarding, suitability, staffing, refurbishment costs to meet registration (with independent regulatory body HIQA) conditions. Cork Kerry Healthcare continue to advocate for additional funding to expand the number of residential places.

(i) Cllr John Sheehan moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That in view of the well proven harmful effects of vaping, especially to young people, this Forum would call on the Minister for Health to bring in further measures to restrict their widespread use among non-smokers, especially in terms of marketing and availability."

A written response from Dr Anne Sheahan, Area Director of Public Health, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Sheehan thanked Dr Sheahan for her written reply. He stated that there is was considerable evidence on the negative impact of vapes. Cllr Sheehan welcomed the legislation currently being drafted to restrict the use of nicotine inhaling products and the ban on the sale, manufacture or import of single-use or disposable vapes in Ireland. Cllr Sheehan highlighted how vaping products are being marketed to young people and agreed with the proposed restriction on the sale of flavours which appeal to children, as well as a ban on point of sale advertising displays in shops. Cllr Sheehan stated that nicotine inhaling products should be reoriented as medicinal products to assist people who are trying to quit smoking.

5. Questions

(a) Cllr. Damien Geoghegan put forward the following question:

"Following the cessation of services, what plans do the HSE have regarding the replacement of the registrar and the continuation of registry office services in Dungarvan, Co Waterford?"

A written response from Ms Michelle Doyle, A/Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Geoghegan whilst acknowledging reply from HSE Management, sought clarity in relation to recruitment of staffing to the civil registration services. Ms Doyle advised that she would seek an update on this and arrange for a reply to issue.

(b) Cllr. Mikey Sheehy put forward the following question:

"Will this Forum support my call to make the shingles vaccine available to all persons in older age brackets. The monetary cost of this vaccine is prohibitive in Ireland in comparison to other countries."

A written response from Dr Anne Sheehan, Director of Public Health, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted.

(c) Cllr. Cathal Byrne put forward the following question:

"To ask the HSE to provide the number of persons over 16 and under 16 on waiting lists for speech and language therapy in County Wexford and the numbers waiting more than 12, 26, 52 and 104 weeks respectively."

A written response from Ms Michelle Doyle, A/Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Byrne acknowledged the reply and asked Management to clarify sentence advising no Speech and Language Therapist on Wexford South CAMHS Team which it is understood is a result of a vacancy.

(d) Cllr. Jackie Healy Rae put forward the following question:

"How many people are waiting for cataract operations in the SSWHG, please give a breakdown as to how long these people have been waiting and give an age profile of the patients."

A written response from Ms Helen Donovan, Chief Executive Officer, South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Healy-Rae was satisfied with this reply.

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

"The amount paid to consultancy houses for the provision of services within each individual hospital and hospital group under the remit of this forum, in the years 2022, 2023, 2024 year to date, in tabular form, detailed by the type of service provided."

A written response from Dr Gerard O'Callaghan, Chief Operations Officer, South\South West Hospital Group was not ready with information still outstanding and is to be forwarded to Cllr Horgan on completion.

(f) Cllr. Fergal Browne put forward the following question:

To ask when the charge for getting bloods tested by local GPs was first introduced for medical cardholders and if this can be waived in the case of patients recovering from cancer.

A written response from Ms Geraldine Crowley, Assistant National Director, Enhanced Community Care Programme & Primary Care Contracts was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Browne thanked Management for this reply and advised he would work with people involved to clarify process and signpost as appropriate in relation to charges.

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

"How many people who have been approved for Home Care in the South East and are still waiting on the service? How long are applicants currently waiting to have the service in place from when it was approved?"

A written response from Ms Michelle Doyle, A/Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Dunphy acknowledged the reply, however he raised concerns in relation to the availability of staff to deliver home support services and particularly in rural areas given the ongoing recruitment difficulties.

Ms Michelle Doyle A/Chief Officer stated that recruitment and retention challenges impact on the ability to deliver approved services either in part or in full. Despite the significant level of service provision, the demand for Home Support, has grown considerably over the past number of years given the ageing population, increasing dependency and more complex cases presenting.

Ms Doyle advised of the ongoing national Home Support Improvement Programme with the aim of standardising service delivery across health regions, making home support services more person-centred and in preparation for regulation of the services.

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

Can we please have an update on when the Clinical Nurse Specialist / Crisis Intervention Nurse Post as this it is a key position that needs to be filled as a priority.

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, South West Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Moriarty stated that she was not satisfied with the reply as there was no definite timeframe. Tess O'Donovan advised that there is a panel in place, however there is a Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) ceiling is also in operation and Cork Kerry Healthcare as with other health areas is required to prioritise all posts. Ms O'Donovan advised Cllr Moriarty that she would provide an update to her on the post in a few weeks. Cllr Moriarty thanked Ms O'Donovan and hoped there would be a positive update forthcoming.

(i) Cllr. Marie Moloney put forward the following question:

"What is the up-to-date position with regard to the provision of a Primary Care Centre in Killarney"

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, South West Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Moloney thanked HSE Management for the reply and noted the benefits of having a Primary Care facility in

Killarney. Cllr Moloney asked for clarification in relation to the site and specifically when work will commence on this development. Ms O'Donovan in response advised that there are a number of stages to completion in a capital development process. The HSE is liaising with Kerry County Council on the proposed development on a local authority site. It is not possible for the HSE to provide specific timeframes for the development at present as it will be necessary to wait until the formal advisory for Budget Allocation 2025 is received.

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

"That the HSE would provide an update in relation to the proposed badly needed new Primary Care Centre for the Blarney Area"

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, South West Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Sheehan noted the reply and stated that he hoped for the Primary Care Centre to be progressed as soon as possible given the local need for this facility.

6. Date and Time of next meeting - 7th November 2024 at 11am. Venue: Council Chambers, County Hall, Co Cork.

Two Matters of Urgency - Raised by Councillors Jackie Healy Rae and Peter Horgan

1. Ambulance Service West Cork and Kerry - Cllr Jackie Healy Rae

Cllr Jackie Healy Rae raised the urgent matter of a decision by the National Ambulance Service (NAS) in relation to plans to restrict emergency ambulance cover in West Cork and Kerry which were to come into effect by the 23rd September 2024. This would have significant detrimental impact on the local populations in the large geographic areas covered in West Cork and Kerry. It is understood that following Ministerial intervention, that the HSE / NAS subsequently clarified that there is no current or planned reduction of NAS services for Cork and Kerry. Whilst this intervention and clarification was welcomed, Members including Cllrs Healy Rae, Harrington, Moloney, Collins, Ferris, Moriarty and Quaide all raised their concerns in relation to ambulance services which they indicated are already severely stretched and reported that staff are burnt out. Additional funding is urgently required for additional paramedic staff and vehicles to provide essential emergency cover.

There was no representative from NAS in attendance at this meeting - understandably as this was raised as an urgent matter with little advance notice. Ms Tess O'Donovan advised RHF Members that NAS has operational responsibility for the service and she would bring concerns to them as appropriate.

2. St Killian's Special School, Cork - Cllr Peter Horgan

Cllr Peter Horgan raised the urgent issue regarding the provision of therapists in St Killian's Special School. He highlighted the need of children attending the school and asked the reason for the delay in putting Therapists into the school. He questioned why the HSE is not outsourcing therapy services to private providers. Cllr Marie Ahern agreed that there is a need therapists in the school. Cllr Margaret McDonald also supported Cllr Horgan on this issue.

Ms Tess O'Donovan in reply advised that the Government has prioritised the reinstatement of health and social care supports in special schools. In that regard, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CKCH) is continuing to engage with its CDNT lead agencies to progress this work and solutions.

Specifically St. Killian's Special School is aligned to Children's Disability Network Team CDNT 8. Cllr Horgan asked further questions in relation to the Pilot Scheme and also in relation to discretion in relation to funding to provide a solution to this urgent concern. Ms O'Donovan advised of a national pilot scheme in relation to Special Schools – whilst St Killian's is not part of current phase although it is understood that another phase is upcoming.