

# REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM

**Chairperson,**  
**Cllr. Ann Marie Ahern**  
**Regional Health Forum South**

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

**Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> March 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 John Coonan

Cllr Caroline Cronin\*

Cllr Pat Dunphy

Cllr Deirdre Ferris\*

Cllr Dominic Finn

Cllr John Fleming

Cllr Ger Frisby

Cllr Damian Geoghegan

Cllr Finbarr Harrington

Cllr Peter Horgan

Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley

Cllr Marie Moloney

Cllr Norma Moriarty\*

Cllr Marie Murphy\*

Cllr Tony O'Shea\*

Cllr John O'Leary

Cllr John Pratt

Cllr Daniel Pender

Cllr John Sheehan

Cllr Mikey Sheehy

Cllr Michael Smith

Cllr Joe Sullivan

Cllr Adrienne Wallace\*

Cllr Adam Wyse

**\* attended online**

### **Apologies:**

Cllr Fiona Kerins

Cllr Margaret McDonnell

### **In Attendance:**

Ms Julie O'Neill, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Kerry, HSE South West\*

Ms Mari O'Donovan, Head of Primary Care, HSE South West

Ms Michelle Doyle, Head of Service, Disability Services, HSE Dublin and South East

Mr Jonathon Hoare, Director of Communications and Public Affairs, HSE South West

Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

**\* attended online**

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

### **1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

On the proposal of Cllr Dominic Finn seconded by Cllr Ger Frisby the minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025 were approved and adopted by the members.

### **2. Chairperson's Correspondence**

The members adopted the Annual Report 2024.

### **3. Committees**

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

- (a) South East Committee Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025 in Kilkenny
- (b) South West Committee Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025 in Tralee

### **4. Notices of Motion**

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

"To seek the breakdown of Resource Allocation Group applications for all CHOs and LHOs covering the HSE South West along with payments made for 2024 and 2025 year to date and the amount of applications outstanding or awaiting payment, in tabular form."

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 asked whether applications for children and adults were submitted to the RAG for approval. Mari O'Donovan advised that submissions were received for paediatrics and adults and that there are no waiting lists for standard aids and appliances in HSE South and West at present.

(b) Cllr Daniel Pender moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"For the HSE to provide an update on the number of staff vacancies in CDNT in Carlow/Kilkenny and the same figure for the previous year."

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 Pender acknowledged the reply and asked for information on measures in place to support staff recruitment and retention to the CDNT. Michelle Doyle outlined that this remains a focus for the HSE with some improvement over the last year. Disability Services continue to recruit therapy posts having received approval. Cllr Browne asked whether the implementation of Progressing Disability Services in September 2021 and the assignment of children with complex needs to Disability Services or non-complex needs to Primary Care has impacted on the overall service. Michelle Doyle advised that there is ongoing collaboration across Primary Care and Disability Services in relation to children with non-complex and complex needs to ensure they are on the correct care pathway. The staffing in Primary Care is equally challenging with shortages in certain therapy grades across the service, or staff leaving due to promotional opportunities.

(c) Cllr John Fleming moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"To Request an update on the proposed primary care centre for New Ross Co Wexford."

A written response from Ms Sinéad Reynolds, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Fleming acknowledged the written reply. He outlined the need for a new Primary Care Centre in New Ross and asked for this to be progressed without delay. Cllr Fleming also asked about the PIN and e-tender procurement process and whether there are more specific timeframes available from HSE Estates. Michelle Doyle advised that she would ask HSE Estates to provide clarification on process and any further details as available.

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

"For the month of January 2025, can figures please be provided for how many people were waiting in trolleys in University Hospital Kerry. Please give a 7-day average across the month from Monday through to Sunday."

A written response from Ms Julie O'Neill, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Kerry, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted.

(e) Cllr Joe Sullivan moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"What is the timeline for the delivery of the long-awaited Primary Care Centre for Gorey County Wexford. When can it reasonably be expected to be operational."

A written response from Ms Sinéad Reynolds, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Sullivan noted that the delivery of the long-awaited Gorey Primary Care is critical for the area. He outlined developments in nearby areas such as Enniscorthy, Carnew and Arklow over the last ten years and yet Gorey Primary Care remains outstanding. Cllr Sullivan urged HSE Managers and Capital and Estates to prioritise this Primary Care Centre development given the health needs of the local population.

Michelle Doyle Head of Disability Services acknowledged the concerns raised by Cllr Sullivan and advised that she would raise these issues with HSE Capital and Estates.

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

"That the HSE would seriously consider availing of the vacant premises as an Ambulance base for the Cobh area using the new vacant unit that is attached to the Primary Care Centre in Cobh."

A written response from Mr Rob Moriarty, National Ambulance Service was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Finn noted the written response. Mari O'Donovan Head of Primary Care advised that the NAS will commit to assessing the premises in Cobh to determine its suitability having regard for location, accessibility, and operational feasibility. However, it is not possible to have ambulance bases/services in every location. Ms O'Donovan confirmed that the HSE considers all vacant buildings and how best to use them. She agreed to take this request back to relevant Management for review.

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

"To ask for detailed update on plans for Kelvin Grove site Carlow town."

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 Browne acknowledged the written reply. He stated that this site was previously owned by Carlow County Council. He was satisfied with confirmation that that Holy Angels would now progress on Kelvin Grove site and the Children's Disability Network Team would be developed on the St Dymphna's campus. Cllr Browne asked that these developments would proceed and that an update on timeframes would be provided by HSE Capital and Estates. Michelle Doyle thanked Cllr Browne for raising this matter and as Head of Disability Services she is keen to progress in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders from a service perspective.

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

"That this Forum calls on the Minister for Health and the Government to introduce legislation to ban the use of vaping products (e-cigarettes) in indoor public spaces, workplaces, and other designated areas, similar to the existing smoking ban."

A discussion was held in the Chambers, it was decided to write to the Minister for Health

(i) Cllr Finbarr Harrington moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That the HSE would send a list of all the available services at Bantry General Hospital to all the GPs and South Doc in the catchment area of BGH, i.e. West Cork and South Kerry."

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 Harrington thanked management for their comprehensive reply and noted the range of services provided at Bantry General Hospital. He stated that it is important for all GPs in the area to be aware of services available at the hospital and particularly Locum GPs who may not be familiar with these. Mari O'Donovan agreed it is important to ensure GPs are informed of various services available at Bantry General Hospital including the Acute Medical Assessment Unit and the Local Injury Unit. In addition Ms O'Donovan also advised that an Endocrinologist and Cardiologist post were recently advertised for the hospital.

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

"That we work with the parents and friends of St Francis Special school past and present in locating a mid-Kerry based adult respite centre with a view to providing for the continuing needs of the students who have very few if any options when they become adults."

A written response from Ms Julie O'Neill, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Kerry, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Moriarty noted this written response and advised members of a recent meeting between parents/families in St Francis Special School, and local Kerry councillors. The powerful testimonies from

parents at this meeting emphasised their needs for improved respite / other support services for their children when they become adults. Respite services are much needed by families. Cllr Moriarty urged the HSE to do more to ensure better service provision given the increased demand for respite services.

Ms Julie O'Neill IHA Manager advised that she is familiar with these important issues having worked in the school. She acknowledged the importance of respite provision for children and adults and the HSE has invested significantly in respite care in recent years. The HSE is engaged with St Francis Special School and supportive of their proposal for transitional respite provision, however, this is funding dependent. Other Forum Members supported Cllr Moriarty's motion highlighting the needs for families to be able to have planned respite. Cllr Moriarty thanked Members for their collegiality and advised HSE Management that they would continue to advocate for this service.

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

"That the HSE Regional Health Forum South represents and supports the upfront addressing of the continued staff shortages/vacancies with particular reference to mental health services that are having an extremely serious and detrimental effect on the service."

A written response from Ms Sinéad Reynolds, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford, and from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Coonan acknowledged the written reply and welcomed the National Service Plan 2025 developments. However, he outlined the staffing deficits in Mental Health Services across the country and particularly in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services where there are vacancies in specialist roles. Access to services is impacted and this is difficult for service users and their families. Cllr Coonan stated that current staff are under significant pressures and that unfortunately Mental Health Services are sometimes referred to as the 'Cinderella service' of the HSE and that RHF member should advocate to the Department of Health for additional funding and for Mental Health services to be resourced appropriately. A number of other Members strongly supported Cllr Coonan's Motion. Cllr Coonan also questioned delays in the HSE recruitment process.

Michelle Doyle thanked Cllr Coonan for raising this important issue and outlined that the appointment of a CAMHS Clinical Director to the area will assist with service improvement. In addition, children may need service inputs from across CAMHS, Primary Care and Disability Services and under the new IHA Structures the focus will be on developing integrated children's services.

Julie O'Neill IHA Manager outlined challenges in CAMHS recruitment and that vacancies across MHS are a concern. Mari O'Donovan advised that other services are also experiencing staffing deficits. The HSE is working to address vacancies, approve posts and progress recruitment. There are shortages nationally and internationally of particular specialties including CAMHS Consultant Psychiatrists and other MHS nursing and therapy professionals.

## **5. Questions**

(a) Cllr Fergal Browne put forward the following question:

"Can I ask for update regarding timeline for when minor injuries unit will be opened in Carlow town?"

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 Browne acknowledged the reply and outlined the urgent need in the Carlow area for this necessary development. He asked for specific details on timelines. Michelle Doyle agreed that she would ask HSE Capital and Estates for an update to be provided once they are available.

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

"To ask for a breakdown of all those awaiting audiology assessment and treatment in CHO4 by LHO area from 0 to 65 plus and the length of time that they are awaiting intervention, by age, in tabular form and the measures being considered locally and nationally to clear such a waiting list."

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 noted the reply and had a number of queries for HSE Management in relation to data and whole-time equivalents.

Mari O'Donovan Head of Primary Care in response advised that Audiology is a regional service and that the centralised waiting list for Health Region Southwest Audiology maintains is returned functionally as South Lee. She stated that outreach is being scoped in North Cork Primary Care Centre which has suitable clinical rooms available. Ms O'Donovan stated that they are seeking an additional Audiologist in Kerry. HSE South West Audiology Service has undertaken waiting list actions to improve access to services and would also consider all suitably qualified applicants.

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

"What is the waiting time for Orthopaedic operations and procedures in UHW, and what is the waiting time for operations in Kilcreene Hospital, Kilkenny."

A written response from Ms Sinéad Reynolds, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Dunphy asked for further update on actions to improve waiting times given that there are a substantial number of people on the waiting list for Kilcreene Orthopaedic Unit in particular.

(d) Cllr Daniel Pender put forward the following question:

"To ask the HSE what measures they are applying to improve retention of care staff for home help."

A written response from Ms Sinéad Reynolds, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford, and from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Pender thanked Management for the response. He outlined that his constituents are concerned about getting their approved services given the ongoing staffing challenges and particularly in rural areas. Cllr Pender highlighted concerns about the number of different home support workers going into the home which can be difficult for service users and their families. Michelle Doyle outlined that the HSE as well as

private providers are experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties. She agreed with Members that continuity of service provision is important for those in receipt of services, and whilst the HSE makes every effort to ensure stability and continuity at times it may be necessary to have a number of providers involved in the delivery of a package of care. The HSE endeavours to provide flexible working rosters and other measures for staff.

(e) Cllr John Sheehan put forward the following question:

"Can the HSE clarify if the HSE Building; (Father O Leary Hall) on Shandon Street Cork is sold? Can the HSE Confirm if it was offered to the Land Development Agency and Cork City Council for sale. If there is no interest from these parties is it the HSE's intention to place it on the open market?"

A written response from Mr Daniel Clifford, Director of Estates, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Sheehan thanked Management for their detailed reply. He requested a more detailed timeline for the disposal of the property (which is a historical building) on the open market. The building is currently used by local youth clubs. Mari O'Donovan advised that she would revert to Daniel Clifford HSE Capital and Estates on this matter and advise of the context of this query and arrange to revert to Cllr Sheehan.

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

"Given Killarney has been chosen for a Minor Injuries Unit and this is welcome, what plans, if any are in place for a similar unit to be placed in the North of the county in Tralee or Listowel to further relieve pressure on UHK?"

A written response from Ms Julie O'Neill, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Kerry, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted.

(g) Cllr Liam Brazil put forward the following question:

"To ask what is the HSE intention for the old Health Centre Building in Knockmahon, Bunmahon, Co Waterford it hasn't been in use since around 2012?"

A written response from Ms Sinéad Reynolds, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Brazil acknowledged the written reply, however, he raised concerns in relation to the building which has been empty for some time and queried the length of time it is taking for the HSE to decide on whether or not to dispose of the property. Cllr Brazil indicated that the same stands for Stradbally Health Centre.

Cllr O'Leary supported Cllr Brazil and requested an update on Kilmeaden Health Centre.

Michelle Doyle stated that she would take Cllr Brazil's concerns back to HSE Estates and request further details from them and also seek an update on Kilmeaden.

(h) Cllr Joe Sullivan put forward the following question:

"What is the up-to-date situation in relation to the closed Health Centre at Camolin County Wexford. In formulating your answer, I would ask you to bear in mind I asked this question first at Health Forum level some 11 years ago."

A written response from Ms Sinéad Reynolds, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted.

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

"Given the increasing demand for rehabilitation and dementia-specific beds in Kerry, which is contributing to delays in patient discharge from University Hospital Kerry (UHK), what plans are in place to address this issue? Are there any commitments for additional bed capacity or dedicated facilities to support patients requiring specialised care?"

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 reference to additional capacity and queried whether the 13 and 15 beds mentioned in the response were separate entities and the timeline. He stated that all patients and particularly those with dementia need to be in appropriate spaces and not on hospital trolleys.

Julie O'Neill confirmed that the additional capacity will be dementia specific and short-term beds in the CNU Killarney. Cllr Moloney asked why patients were not being moved over into the new building. Julie O'Neill in response advised that the new Community Nursing Unit (CNU) is a Public Private Partnership (PPP) development - the original timeframe received has been delayed with no new date as of yet. This is not related to staffing of a new CNU. PPPs are managed at a national level and with regulatory requirements by HIQA, these need to be completed prior to handover of the building. Once patients move into the new CNU it will be possible to then consider the old CNU location for other services / purposes. Julie O'Neill advised she would keep members updated.

(j) Cllr Finbarr Harrington put forward the following question:

"Can we please get an update on exactly what current School Dental service is available in West Cork and where exactly are we with recruitment of School Dentists in the West Cork area."

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 Harrington outlined difficulties accessing dental services locally and people having to travel for appointments. In response Mari O'Donovan advised of the current recruitment process to a vacant dental surgeon post in West Cork whilst acknowledging challenges with the availability of dental staff and shortages of dentists nationally and internationally. She outlined that the Orthodontic Service is a regional service at St Finbarr's Unit Cork city.

Cllr Lenihan Foley supported this question and outlined delays in school dental screening in the East Cork area. Mari O'Donovan in reply advised that school dental programme was impacted by the covid pandemic, however work is ongoing with target classes. She also outlined oral health initiatives such as 'Lift the Lip' in Cork city. As part of targeting of resources, each dental service maintains a commitment to urgent/emergency treatment for the relief of pain, infection, and the sequelae of trauma. Where service deficits are identified, resources where available can be redirected to address those needs.

(k) Cllr Dominic Finn put forward the following question:



“What is the current waiting time for a child to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) once a GP referral is done for the child?”

A written response from Ms Julie O’Neill, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Kerry, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Finn acknowledged the detailed reply. He indicated that this question related to an individual case and would therefore submit details directly.

Julie O’Neill IHA Manager advised of a planned CAMHS Hub for all of the Region for brief intensive interventions and access to relevant Consultant/Nursing services based on clinical risk of those presenting. A premises has been identified for this and recruitment for the Consultant post is proceeding. As with other disciplines and specialties there are difficulties in the recruitment of CAMHS Consultants and also Psychologists.

Ms O’Neill stated that diagnostic assessment and interventions for children and adolescents with autism is generally within the remit of HSE Primary Care and Children’s Disability Network Teams. When deciding if a child or adolescent needs to attend CAMHS, a number of factors are considered by the CAMHS Team who decide if the child or adolescent reaches the threshold for community CAMHS i.e. whether their mental health disorder is moderate to severe. For children and adolescents with complex needs/disability who may also present with a moderate to severe mental health disorder at the same time, this may involve joint working or shared care between services and other agencies supporting children and adolescents.

Ms O’Neill reflected the need to move beyond individual service silos and in line with Sláintecare progress fully integrated children’s services.

Mari O’Donovan reiterated the difficulties in the recruitment of psychologists - posts are approved but the HSE is unable to fill. The HSE is looking to colleges and recruitment from abroad. The training of clinical psychologists is a lengthy process. Ms O’Donovan advised Members that the Region has advertised a Regional Director of Psychology post as part future planning. Telehealth whilst not ideal is one interim option. In addition, there are various community and voluntary organisations who provide very good supports to children and their families.

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

“Are there staff vacancies impacting the service provided to Fertha Day Centre Cahersiveen and if so when will those vacancies be filled and how will service delivery be impacted in the interim.”

A written response from Ms Julie O’Neill, Integrated Healthcare Area Manager Kerry, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Moriarty acknowledged this reply noting that the matter had been addressed.

6. Date and Time of next meeting - Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 at 11am in Council Chamber, Cork County Council, County Hall, Co Cork.