

MINUTES **MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

Thursday, 27th February 2025 at 11am
Venue: Council Chambers, Cork County Council, County Hall, Cork

Present:

Cllr Ann Marie Ahern **Chairperson**
Cllr Declan Barry
Cllr Liam Brazil
Cllr Tomas Breathnach*
Cllr Fergal Browne*
Cllr John Coonan
Cllr Caroline Cronin
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 Fiona Kerins

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

*** attended online**

Apologies:

Cllr Ann Bambury
Cllr Danny Collins
Cllr Roger Kennedy
Cllr Marie Moloney

In Attendance:

Ms Bridie O'Sullivan, Director of Nursing and Midwifery, South/South West Hospitals Group
Ms Mari O'Donovan, Head of Primary Care, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
Ms Derval Howley, Head of Service, Health and Wellbeing, HSE Dublin and South East
Dr Sinead Reynolds, IHA Manager, HSE Dublin and South East*
Ms Emma Finn, Regional Director of Communications and Public Affairs,
HSE Dublin and South East*
Members of the HSE Regional Health Forum South 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 7th November 2024

On the proposal of Cllr Coonan seconded by Cllr Frisby the minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 7th November 2024 were approved and adopted by the members.

2. Chairperson's Correspondence

There was no Chairpersons correspondence.

3. Committees

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

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

4. Notices of Motion

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

"The length of time it take for someone to get through to the local Caredoc. This was an issue again over the Christmas period. Apparently it is a centralised system with over 20 taking calls but it is not fit for purpose."

A written response from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Health Area Manager, Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted.

As with other health care services, Caredoc Out-of-hours GP service experienced a significant surge in demand over the Christmas and New Year period. Wait times can be frustrating, particularly during peak activity hours holiday periods, when demands are at their highest. It should be noted that the data highlighted the high proportion of patients accessed the service in the South East compared to the national average for this period.

Cllr Lenihan Foley supported the Motion and stating that there were similar issues experienced with SouthDoc in Cork.

Dr Howley highlighted that the surge in confluence of influenza, RSV, and gastrointestinal illness circulating in the community contributed to the increased demands and pressures on the entire healthcare system from ED, acute inpatient, General Practitioner and Out of Hours GP services. She advised Members that there continues to be high levels of flu and respiratory illness in the community and asked that they would continue to promote the uptake of Vaccinations.

Dr Howley also advised Members that Caredoc remained operational and continued to provide services during the two significant weather events including the Storm Eowyn (red warning) both of which led to service disruptions across the country.

(b) Cllr Pat Dunphy moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

“Update on the Primary Care Centre developments in Kilkenny City and County.”

A written response from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Health Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Dunphy thanked Management for their written response and welcomed primary care centre developments in Kilkenny. Cllr Dunphy referenced a presentation from HSE Estates at a recent South East Committee Meeting which was very well received. He asked for an update on the proposed developed to in Ballyhale Health Centre in Co. Kilkenny. Derval Howley advised that she would liaise with her colleagues in Estates and arrange for an update to be provided directly on this.

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

“Can the HSE provide a list of existing step-down services particular reference to the Carlow/Kilkenny area.”

A written response from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Health Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Coonan acknowledged the written response from the IHA Manager. He highlighted the need for increased step down services with an increasing population and pressure on acute hospital beds.

Dr Howley advised that beds in the public system are consistently monitored with updates on urgent and emergency care, analysis of delayed transfers of care, acute and community stepdown bed capacity. The winter surge does place additional pressures on the acute beds and nursing home facilities. Cllr Dunphy in support of this Motion also highlighted the need for appropriate aftercare and other community supports for frail older persons who need care at home or cannot go home alone. Dr Sinéad Reynolds Integrated Healthcare Manager advised members that they will continue to advocate for additional resources and supports.

(d) Cllr Ann Marie Ahern moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

“That the HSE establish an interim physiotherapy unit in East Cork until a permanent location is in place to accommodate the greater population east of Dunkettle.”

A written response from Ms Julie O’Neill, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Ms Mari O’Donovan informed members that two Primary Care Centres have been planned and approved. As an interim measure Physiotherapy Services are currently working out of the refurbished area in St Raphael’s Centre, Youghal. Ms O’Donovan asked Cllr Ahern to submit details of any individual concerns and that she would follow up on same.

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

“That this Forum calls for the standalone Chemotherapy Unit at University Hospital Kerry to be added to the HSE’s priority capital list. If a new capital submission is required, this

should be prepared as a matter of urgency, in light of the considerable time that has elapsed since the project was first initiated.”

A written response from Mr Daniel Clifford, Assistant National Director of Estates, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Sheehy thanked the Chairperson for her support with this matter. He outlined his disappointment at the apparent lack of progress on this project development in University Hospital Kerry. The care and treatment provided at the current unit is outstanding however the building is not appropriate or fit for purpose. Cllr Sheehy outlined that service users and their families are most appreciative for the services provided but a standalone building is required. He had written to HSE Management (Cork/Kerry) on this matter. Cllr Sheehy requested that the Forum write to the Minister for Health requesting that this matter be prioritised without further delay. Cllr Norma Moriarty supported the Motion and seconded the proposal to write to the Minister.

Ms Bridie O’Sullivan commended both Cllr Sheehy and Moriarty as two dedicated advocates of this project. She agreed with the need for this new build and noted their disappointment with the project development. Ms O’Sullivan outlined that there has been ongoing work to create additional bed capacity at UHK and that this project is a priority for HSE Capital Estates plans. Ms O’Sullivan thanked Cllr Sheehy and Cllr Foley and confirmed that she would take their concerns to the REO and Hospital Group Management and follow up on correspondence previously submitted by Cllr Sheehy.

(f) Cllr Fiona Kerins moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

“That the HSE provide an update on the Medical Centre in Lehenaghmore, Cork.”

A written response from Mr Daniel Clifford, Assistant National Director of Estates, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Kerins asked when exactly will the Medical Centre will be operational. Ms O’Donovan in response advised that it was not possible to provide a definitive timeframe at present. However once an update is available she will arrange for this to be provided directly to Cllr Kerins.

(g) Cllr Tony O’Shea moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

“That the HSE would outline their plans for the HSE building located on O’Brien Street, Mallow.”

A written response from Mr Daniel Clifford, Assistant National Director of Estates, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr O’Shea acknowledged the written response. He advised members that there is significant work ongoing to tidy-up towns and villages across the area. This co-ordinated effort may also include derelict or unused buildings. As this HSE building is located in a prime location in Mallow town, it is causing concern and a timeframe on the plans for the building going on the open market would be appreciated. Ms O’Donovan advised that the HSE have a large portfolio of buildings and has to go through a specific disposal process for vacant / unwanted properties. Whilst there is no specific timeline yet for the disposal of this property, Ms O’Donovan will revert to Mr Daniel Clifford HSE Capital and Estates on this.

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

"That this Forum supports the urgent introduction of school therapists to all special schools in the Cork/Kerry area in a way that does not take from existing CDNT staff complements, in a time sensitive manner and further seeks the attendance of the Ministers for disability at the next forum to engage with Forum members on funding lines required to support such therapy supports for children in the Cork/Kerry area."

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

Cllr Horgan noting the written response asked to how many therapists were in place? Ms O'Donovan replied advising that recruitment process is ongoing, however there are difficulties in recruiting qualified therapists to these posts.

Cllr Horgan stated that the terms and conditions of contracts in these Section 39 organisations are impacting recruitment efforts. Employees in these organisations do not have the same pay and conditions as HSE-employed colleagues. Ms O'Donovan stated that there recruitment is challenging across all disciplines - there is a shortage of qualified healthcare staff nationally (and internationally). In addition geographical location and property prices in the school area are factors which may influence the take up of posts. Ms O'Donovan acknowledged the impact on children and their families in accessing services. As members are aware, the matter of pay and conditions for Section 39 workers is a national issue - it was proposed that the Forum write to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth of Ireland seeking these matters be resolved without further delay and to ensure these essential therapy supports and intervention are provided for children in the Cork/Kerry area. Cllr Moriarty seconded the Motion to write to the Minister.

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

"To request an update on mental health supports in the Carlow and Kilkenny area."

A written response from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Health Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Pender acknowledged the written response provided. He asked for further details and information on the planned capital developments.

Cllr Pender welcomed the development of the Eating Disorders Team. He noted that many of these new services were to be located in the Kilkenny area with people from Carlow required to travel and queried whether it would be possible to co-locate these services or provide outreach services.

In response Dr Sinéad Reynolds IHA Manager advised of the national Model of Care for Eating Disorders programme. Given the specialist nature of these services, it is necessary to ensure an appropriate level of each specialty to enable a functioning team to provide assessment and treatment.

Dr Reynolds also reported to members that as IHA Manager she and her colleagues would work to develop mental health services at primary care level across the region.

(j) Cllr Margaret McDonnell moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"To ask the HSE to review the situation where a person applying for Home help hours in the South West area can avail of same for personal care hours as opposed to light house work or food preparation. In a lot of cases elderly people are not taking up on these hours as they are uncomfortable with a non-family members providing personal care but would really appreciate help in other areas."

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

Cllr McDonnell said that she had come across this issue through her work and whilst out meeting constituents during the election. Ms O'Donovan agreed that home support provision is an important service and essential for supporting people to continue living at home or who may support to return home following a stay in hospital. The focus of the home support service is to meet the identified clinical needs of clients in their homes. With increased service demands and staffing challenges (for HSE and Private Providers) there are waiting lists in operation. Therefore it is necessary to prioritise clinical needs and unfortunately it is not possible to provide assistance with domestic and housework duties.

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

"That a Crisis Team be established for Kerry as it is an area with very poor access to crisis mental health services and it requires the CT approach to be able to provide an effective service."

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

Cllr Moriarty thanked HSE Management for the response and suggested that her related Question be taken with this Motion. She was dissatisfied that this valid business case submission was not approved. The Crisis Nurse post would be closely associated with a Crisis Team. Ms O'Donovan advised that the new Health Regions and Integrated Healthcare areas are working to develop mental health services in relation to prevention, and when young people and / or adults experience crisis and to develop other alternative appropriate options to the Emergency Department. Ms O'Donovan assured members that MHS and the IHA committed to advocating for additional posts and funding.

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

"What is the HSE's plan for both the District Hospital and Columbanus in Killarney when the new Community Hospital will open?"

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

Cllr Healy-Rae asked whether existing building on St Columbanus could be used for a Minor Injury Unit or will there be a new build for this service and about the staffing involved. He also outlined concerns about the numbers of beds in the new Community Nursing Unit building. Ms O'Donovan advised that schedule of accommodation will be developed for St Columbanus with reconfiguration of buildings where it is feasible. The HSE is continually reviewing need vis a vis service planning.

Cllr Moriarty also requested that there be a Day Procedures Clinic in addition to the Minor Injuries Unit to alleviate pressures at UHK. Ms Bridie O'Sullivan stated that there has been an overall increase in bed numbers and bed capacity in UHK. She acknowledged that unfortunately at times it is necessary to reschedule elective surgeries. It would not be feasible to open a surgical hub onsite in Killarney given the clinical need to be in the proximity of Tralee. Ms O'Sullivan advised that she would take all these issues raised back to hospital management.

(m) Cllr. Dominic Finn put forward the following question:

"While I welcome and sincerely thank you for all the services being provided in the Cobh Primary Care Centre, can I ask for the provision of an Antenatal Clinic (outreach clinic from CUMH) to be considered and provided in the centre due to the growing population in Cobh, and also to make it much easier for patients to access, rather than having to travel out of town."

A written response from Mr Adrian Bradley, General Manager, Cork University Maternity Hospital was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Finn thanked Management for the response and appreciated that the HSE are continually reviewing the needs and reviewing the situation. Ms Bridie O'Sullivan advised that currently we have eight (8) outreach clinics funded in Cork. Should additional funding be made available they certainly could consider new facilities in other locations including Cobh.

6. Questions

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

"To ask if the HSE plan to have a treatment centre for addicts in County Carlow and if not how can other groups go about setting up one."

A written response from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Health Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted.

Dr Howley provided an outline of services provision in Kilkenny and Carlow, noting that services provision ranges from preventative services, to individual and family support services, and treatment services. She advised Cllr Browne to forward any specific individual concerns to her and she would arrange to follow up as appropriate.

(b) Cllr. John Coonan put forward the following question:

"Can the HSE provide an update on its policies and procedures regarding the repurchasing and reuse of hospital aids & appliances within our services?"

A written response from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Health Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Coonan complimented the service provided and emphasised the need to re-model and re-use equipment to ensure value for money. There is a responsibility on everyone in receipt of appliances to take care of them and return them when no longer required.

Dr Howley agreed with Cllr Coonan and confirmed that where possible and clinically appropriate the HSE is recycling equipment in line with standards - this represents value for money and as the Councillor mentioned is more environmentally sustainable.

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

"What is the current status of the rollout of Integrated Healthcare Areas (IHAs), and when is it expected that they will be fully finalised and implemented?"

A written response from Dr Andy Philips, Regional Executive Officer, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Sheehy acknowledged the response and that the integration process was moving at pace. He requested to have the REO be in attendance at a future meeting to hear the issues raised by Forum members.

(d) Cllr. Declan Barry put forward the following question:

"When will weekend emergency cardiac care services, i.e. (Saturday/Sunday, 8am-8pm) commence at UHW?"

A written response from Dr Sinead Reynolds, Integrated Health Manager, Waterford/Wexford, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Barry acknowledged the written reply and welcomed the provisional date to commence these 8am to 8pm services by 18th March 2025. A number of RHF South East members supported this Question and all stated the need for 24/7 cover for the South East.

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

"To ask the HSE what would be the process to transfer the employment of all Section 39/38 therapists in the South/South West area to become employees of the HSE, and if there has ever been a cost compiler or associated with such a process."

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

Cllr Horgan acknowledged the written response and explained how transferring Section 39 Therapists to HSE employment may help to solve recruitment problems and asked whether this would be possible. Ms O'Donovan in response advised that there are a large number (110) of Section 39 organisations with service level agreements in place throughout Cork and Kerry area. These service level arrangements have statutory components.

(f) Cllr. Margaret McDonnell put forward the following question:

"To ask for the plans and timeline in relation to Glanmire Primary Care Centre?"

A written response from Mr Daniel Clifford, Assistant National Director of Estates, HSE South West was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr McDonnell noted that the planning application was not approved recently which was disappointing and asked what was next for the project. Ms O'Donovan advised that at this time there was no specific update on this but would keep the members apprised as future plans are decided on.

(g) Cllr. John O'Leary put forward the following question:

"When is the new ophthalmologist going to be appointed in Clonmel?"

A written response from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Health Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr O'Leary highlighted that there is currently no ophthalmologist in Clonmel which is not satisfactory with the nearest service would be UHW. He noted that the HSE is working to progress recruitment and requested an estimated timeline to achieve this. In response Dr Howley advised she could not provide a definite timeline for the appointment. She acknowledged and regretted the impact on patients. She advised that the HSE are currently looking at interim options whilst the recruitment process is ongoing and that an update once available would be provided to members.

(h) Cllr. Marie Murphy put forward the following question:

"When did the clinical pathways regarding ADHD treatment change in the South Tipperary area and what plans, if any, are in place to provide an ADHD clinic in the South Tipperary catchment area? Are there any financial supports in place to help people pay for private assessments?"

A written response from Ms Roseanne Killeen, Integrated Health Area Manager, Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary, HSE Dublin and South East was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Murphy thanked Management for the written response and welcomed the recent approval under the clinical programme for the development of an Adult ADHD team for the South East. Dr Howley agreed this is very positive to have secured this funding approval and recruitment will be prioritised to commence as soon as possible.

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

"Can we please have an update on exactly where we are with the recruitment of the clinical nurse specialist/ crisis intervention nurse for the Iveragh area?"

A written response from Ms Julie O'Neill, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. This question was taken with Motion 4(k) above.

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

"How many Consultants are on duty in University Hospital Kerry on the weekend?"

A written response from Ms Mary Fitzgerald, General Manager, University Hospital Kerry was circulated to members and the response was taken as noted by the Chairperson.

7. Date and Time of next meeting – 27th March 2025 at 11am. Venue: Council Chambers, Cork County Council, County Hall, Cork.