

**Minutes of Regional Health Forum West held on Tuesday, 25th September
2012 at 2.00pm in Room 1, Education Centre,
HSE Offices, Merlin Park, Galway**

Miontuairiscí Cruinnithe Chinn Bhliana an Fhóraitm Réigiúnach Sláinte, a tionóladh ar an Mháirt, 25 Meán
Fómhair 2012, ag 2.00 .i.n, i Seomra 1 an tIonad Oideachais, Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte,
Páirc Mheirlinne, Gaillimh

Chairperson

Cllr Pádraig Conneely

Members Present

Cllr Liam Blaney	Cllr Mary Hoade	Cllr Tony Mulqueen
Cllr Rose Brennan	Cllr Gordon Hughes	Cllr Gerry Murray
Cllr Ciaran Brogan	Cllr John Kennedy	Cllr Austin Francis O'Malley
Cllr Pat Burke	Cllr Sean MacManus	Cllr Annie May Reape
Cllr Richard Butler	Cllr Tomás Mannion	Cllr Damien Riedy
Cllr John Carroll	Cllr Michael McBride	Cllr Kevin Sheahan
Cllr Catherine Connolly	Cllr John 'Rocky' McGrath	Cllr Tony Ward
Cllr Tom Connolly	Cllr Sean McGowan	Cllr Seamus Weir
Cllr Shaun Cunniffe	Cllr Bernard McGuinness	Cllr Gerry Reynolds
Cllr Ger Fahy	Cllr Aoiffe McLoughlin	
Cllr Laurence Fallon	Cllr Paula McNamara	
Cllr Michael Finnerty	Cllr Tom McNamara	

Apologies

Cllr Michael Hourigan
Cllr Sean MacManus
Cllr Frank McBrearty Jr.
Cllr Brian Meaney

Absent

Cllr Michael Crowe
Cllr Tim Broderick

In Attendance

John Hennessy, Regional Director of Operations
Tony Canavan, Chief Operations Officer, GUH
Catherine Cunningham, Area Manager Galway/Roscommon PCCC Services
Bernard Gloster, Area Manager, Mid West PCCC
Audrey Lambourn, Area Communications Manager
Bill Maher, CEO, Galway Roscommon Hospitals Group
Caitriona Meehan, Consumer Affairs Area Office
Liam Minihan, Asst National Director of Finance
Shirley Murphy, Consumer Affairs Area Office
Paudie O'Riordan, Area Operations Manager West, National Ambulance Service
Francis Rogers, Asst National Director, Human Resources
Chris Rudland, General Manager, Consumer Affairs Area Office

392/41/12 Chairman's Business

Apologies

The Chairperson acknowledged apologies from Cllrs Michael Hourigan, Sean MacManus, Frank McBrearty Jr. and Brian Meaney.

Presentation for next Forum Committee

A presentation on Child Health has already been agreed for the next Forum Committee meeting in December, the Chairperson invited suggestions for a second presentation for that meeting. Some members suggested a presentation on Child Protection.

Agreed: The HSE will seek a relevant specialist to present on Child Protection.

Questionnaire

The four Forum Chairpersons will meet on 25th October, there is therefore a final opportunity for members to respond to the questionnaire circulated for their views on how local democracy can be improved in terms of health matters and how the Forums can be improved to enable a greater role for members.

Agreed: Members are asked to consider these matters and return their completed questionnaire to the Forum office in advance of the 25th Oct.

Draft Schedule of Meetings 2013

Agreed: Members are asked to examine the draft Schedule of Meetings for 2013 in advance of sign off at the next Forum meeting in November.

393/41/12 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 26th June 2012 were proposed by Cllr John Carroll seconded by Cllr Ger Fahy and adopted.

394/41/12 Matters Arising

Local Briefings

Cllr T Mannion requested that notices to local briefings issue closer to the date of the meeting, rather than too early.

Suicide Prevention

Cllrs S Weir and J Kennedy raised discussed the increase of suicide and the development of mental health services. They queried if, as public representatives and members of the Forum, they could bring the issue to a different level. Some members felt that mental health services should be brought into the primary care system. Many members supported the issues raised by the councillors.

Agreed: It was agreed that a presentation on Suicide Prevention would be presented at a future Forum Committee.

Brochure of Services, Nenagh Hospital and Elderly patients, MWRH

Agreed: Cllr J Carroll's request will be resent to CEO, MWRHG, for her attention.

Motions deferred from previous meeting

Cllr C Connolly queried the omission of motions not dealt with at the last Forum meeting. It was agreed that these motions would be dealt with at today's meeting.

MRSA Testing

Cllr C Connolly queried if it was the practice in all hospitals that MRSA testing continues indefinitely for a patient with a history of MRSA?

T Canavan advised that he was not in a position to answer on behalf of clinician.

Agreed: A response to this query will be sought from a clinical specialist.

SDU Funding

Cllr C Connolly queried if SDU funding at GRHUG has been exhausted?

Agreed: T Canavan will revert to Cllr Connolly with further details.

Aras Mhic Dara Nursing Home, Carraroe

Cllr C Connolly queried if any further patients will be admitted to the nursing home?

C Cunningham advised that a couple of beds are currently closed as there are less staff available than the required ratio at present. Staff are working closely on rostering arrangements and two nurses are due to come from GUH to Connemara.

Agreed: C Cunningham will revert to Cllr Connolly with details on the number of beds closed at Carraroe Nursing Home.

395/41/12 Questions

Some members requested that the scheduled presentation take place prior to Questions and Motions. After some discussion it was agreed that the meeting would continue as per the scheduled agenda.

Questions and Responses Document is available on; http://www.hse.ie/eng/About/Who/Regional_Health_Forum_West
Follow Ups from Supplementary Questions include:

W41Q989 – Cllr Gordon Hughes, Ballinamore new community hospital/day care centre

Cllr Hughes had further queried if construction is effectively on hold until the appointment of an operator for the complex? Or will construction go ahead as planned?

Agreed: D McCallion will be requested to contact Cllr Hughes on this matter.

W41Q990 – Cllr Gordon Hughes, Carrick on Shannon Community Nursing Unit

To ask the Executive of the H.S.E North & West what is the up to date position regarding the provision of a new 60 bed community nursing unit in Carrick-on-Shannon?

Agreed: D McCallion will be requested to provide a response to Cllr Hughes' question.

W41Q996 – Cllr Mary Hoade, Tuam Ambulance Base

Cllr Hoade queried if the provision of 24/7 services at Tuam Ambulance Base will be part of the Service Plan for 2013 and how many hours are being provided at present?

P O'Riordan advised that resources for the Tuam Ambulance Base will be part of the 2013 Service Plan, however, there is no guarantee that these will be provided. The intention from mid-October is to use existing crews in Galway to operate at least one crew from Tuam. This will be a limited service and Mr O'Riordan could not advise how many hours the crews will be on site in Tuam. The crews are not designated to Tuam but some will utilise the site. Any proof that response times improve as a result of this will help any future business case for a base in Tuam.

W41Q997 – Cllr Mary Hoade, Retirements 2012

Agreed: F Rogers will provide further specific estimates on the expected number of retirements, by year end 2012.

W41Q998 – Cllr Mary Hoade, Dental and Optical Services, Galway Schools

C Cunningham highlighted for members that only six of the 236 primary schools have yet to be completed despite a loss of resources. Services continue to be managed with a focus on centralised clinics and maximising clinical time and less travel.

There are some challenges with Dental Services due to retirements, absenteeism and illness, however, redeployments are happening to ensure a basic level of service continues to be provided.

Agreed: A list of the six schools mentioned in the response to this question will issue directly to Cllrs Hoade and Catherine Connolly.

W41Q1000 – Cllr Pat Burke, HIQA, Community Hospital / Nursing Homes

Cllr P Burke, as a member of 'Friends of Raheen Hospital in Clare', implored HIQA to be more flexible in their approach to accommodation needs for elderly patients in nursing homes and community hospitals. In particular not to move patients to single rooms unnecessarily.

B Gloster recently met with Cllr Burke on this issue and again reassured him that the HSE is giving attention to the concerns raised. He advised that HIQA do not require all residents in individual rooms, but do require rooms to be a specific size and have criteria around distances between beds and facilities. B Gloster advised that there are wider issues in Raheen and it will require some investment. A viability study is being prepared. The RDO also advised that the HSE take on board all the points raised and that HIQA do not distinguish between public and private regarding regulation arrangements. There are challenges, however, a uniform approach must be taken.

W41Q1001 – Cllr Tomás Mannion, Children's Eye Clinic, East Galway

Cllr Mannion queried when the additional nurse will be employed?

C Cunningham confirmed that there is a prospective candidate available, who may take up the post in the near future. She highlighted that 12 nurses left the system since February and that there is some additional capacity of five student Public Health Nurses remaining in service.

Agreed: A list of the six schools mentioned in the response to this question will issue directly to Cllrs Mannion and Catherine Connolly.

W41Q1002 – Cllr Tom McNamara, Nursing Hours – Agency

Cllr McNamara further queried if the Agency Nurses being hired are retired staff and paid at the top of the scale, some which he believes are paid up to €27/28 per hour. The HSE could spend less and hire young graduates at a much lower rate, rather than they emigrate for employment. Cllr McNamara called for the embargo to be lifted.

F Rogers confirmed that exemptions are being sought from the moratorium to deal with this, as a cost saving measure.

B Gloster added that MW PCCC have retained some mental health nursing graduates and pay them at pre-registration scales, rather than hire agency staff. Pressures for 'as and when' staff are required leaves the HSE with a certain level of dependency on agency staff.

J Hennessy advised that the long term aim is reduce dependency on Agency staff. July this year saw a reduction of 30% on agency staffing compared to last year. 2013 will see further reductions. He advised that a marginal exemption of 10% was given earlier in the year due to retirements.

B Maher concurred with Cllr McNamara and advised that GUH recruit the majority of their graduate nurses, 36 were recently recruited. GUH have achieved a reduction of 38% on the recruitment of agency staffing.

W41Q1003 – Cllr Tom McNamara, Crisis Nurse Service

Cllr McNamara highlighted the importance of the crisis nurse service to the development of the community in Clare.

B Gloster reassured members that any changes to the services would be to improve the service. He agreed that the social care and clinical care provided by the service were important and any improvements in this regard were at the discretion of the Director of Nursing.

W41Q1004, Q1005, Q1006 – Cllr John Carroll, Coronary Beds, Limerick Regional Hospital

Cllr Carroll queried the response issued to this question and requested clarification on how many beds are currently open / opening / will open in the future?

Cllr Carroll highlighted a case of a man in North Tipp with coronary issues/angina who was ‘stopped from going to Limerick and was referred to Galway after some confusion. The man died later in Galway.’ He thought the CCU was to treat these conditions and that Limerick was the Centre of Excellence.

Paudie O’Riordan outlined for Cllr Carroll the process for dealing with coronary patients, i.e. timelines for treatment, etc. The RDO highlighted that there never was a 24 hour Cath Lab in Limerick and that currently the only centre for primary PCI in the West is Galway. He advised that the intention is to provide this service in MW in due course and that what is currently in MWRH is a huge improvement.

Agreed: CEO, MWRHG will be requested to ring Cllr John Carroll directly with clarification on coronary care beds at LRH. Cllrs Ger Fahy and Kevin Sheahan requested similar clarification for all Mid West members.

W41Q1007 – Cllr John Carroll, Nursing Staff, Limerick Regional Hospital

Cllr Carroll had concerns around the safe level of care for the people of North Tipperary, in particular the elderly.

Agreed: CEO, MWRHG will be requested to provide further clarification to Cllr John Carroll on the decrease of nursing staff in LRH.

W41Q1008 – Cllr Catherine Connolly, Ionad Slainte na Tulaigh (PCT)

C Cunningham confirmed for Cllr Connolly that speech and language services are provided via cross cover, as the S&L Therapist who was there is on leave.

Agreed: Further details on the ‘timing and frequency’ of the various services provided at Ionad Slainte na Tulaigh will be issued directly to Cllr Connolly, including details of cross cover arrangements, etc.

Agreed: The RDO advised that he would be happy to pass on the Councillor’s sentiments regarding negotiations with GPs under GMS contracts

W41Q1009 – Cllr Catherine Connolly, Owen Riff Nursing Home

Cllr Connolly queried how many HSE staff work at the nursing home? When will the HSE cease working at the home and what has it cost the HSE? The HSE were to facilitate the nursing home until new owners were installed, some staff in the private nursing home have lost their jobs, while the public service are staffing a private for profit business and are closing public services because there aren’t enough staff.

C Cunningham advised that the HSE were requested by Court order to assist with the nursing home. The HSE were awarded costs which are being pursued by their legal department.

The priority is to ensure that the 22 residents are looked after appropriately. Since the HSE took over they have worked closely with the owners in dealing with day to day rosters and maximising use of the private staff. The new private provider’s are currently seeking registration. Today, there is one manager, two nurses and no care staff on duty.

The RDO highlighted that the nursing home was closed by HIQA, the HSE were requested to intervene while a transfer of ownership takes place. In the meantime the HSE provide care to the residents and will receive appropriate income via Fair Deal.

W41Q1010, Cllr Catherine Connolly, Child Care Development Clinics

Cllr Connolly queried how many children are waiting for clinics?

Agreed: As per the original question raised, the exact numbers of children waiting for their first appointment/review appointment, per age category, etc. will issue directly to Cllr Catherine Connolly.

W41Q1011, Cllr Catherine Connolly, Elective Surgery, GUHs

Cllr Connolly welcomed progress to date on waiting lists. She queried why there are empty beds in MPH and GUH if there are waiting lists? She queried the practice of members of the public, who are scheduled to attend for treatment, having to ring the hospital prior to their appointments to see if there is a bed available for them.

T Canavan highlighted the importance of acknowledging progress to date on waiting lists.

In January, there were 9901 on the list which breached the waiting list target of nine months. Last Thursday there were 295 waiting less than 9 months. The target for the end of September 2012 is nil patients.

Patients having to ring prior to their appointments is not a practice GRUHG are happy with, however, the phone in practice assists staff with maximising the use of total beds, elective vs emergency, planned vs not planned. The aim is to reduce that practice. Progress on the waiting lists has been made without the additional beds being opened in GUHs.

W41Q1012, Cllr Tony Mulqueen, New Unit, Ennis General Hospital

Cllr Mulqueen queried the reasons for the delay in constructing the new unit at Ennis General Hospital? It is nine years since the unit was first planned?

The RDO queried if these matters were raised with Ms A Doherty at her recent briefing to members?

He advised that as far as he is aware, construction commenced 18 months ago.

Agreed: The RDO will refer Cllr Mulqueen's further queries and all MW Members queries, to CEO, MWRHG for direct response.

W41Q10143, Cllr T Mulqueen, ED, Ennis General Hospital

Cllr Mulqueen queried if the 12 hour ED service will cease at Ennis General Hospital, as it did in Nenagh, and if it does cease, what happens at weekends?

Agreed: The RDO will refer Cllr Mulqueen's further queries and all MW Members queries, to CEO, MWRHG for direct response.

W41Q1014, Cllr P Conneely, Absenteeism GUHs

Cllr Conneely queried the genuineness of some sick leave being taken by staff. He acknowledged that absenteeism has decreased but not as much as it should be. This behaviour wouldn't be acceptable in the private sector; there is a problem with absenteeism in the hospital; this has a knock on affect on services. Cllr Conneely would not like to see anyone abuse the system, but would regret anyone losing their jobs.

T Canavan highlighted that absenteeism rates have dropped across the Galway Roscommon University Hospital Group. Absenteeism has a direct cost to the service, the national target of 3.5% achievable but takes a lot of work; work is ongoing on a month by month basis and the trend for GUHs is it's decreasing over 12 months.

C Cunningham advised that Galway PCCC absenteeism is currently below the national average. She wished to acknowledge and support those who have worked to improve these rates.

F Rogers advised that this issue is being taken very seriously.

In the HSE West 780 staff participated in on-site programmes to deal with absenteeism management. There are ongoing monthly evaluations. 90% of sick leave is certified and there are processes in place to refer staff to occupational health physicians.

From Jan – July 2012;

- 5921 return to work discussions have taken place,
- 412 review have been held with individual employees regarding trends,
- 104 staff have been removed from the sick leave scheme,

- ten staff have advanced to the disciplinary procedure process, and
- three staff have lost their jobs.

W41Q1015, Cllr P Conneely, Outpatients Waiting List, GUHs

Cllr Conneely acknowledged progress on the inpatient waiting list and queried if the outpatient list presented is validated?

B Maher acknowledged that the outpatient waiting list is higher than he would like it to be. The Special Delivery Unit have yet to name the targets for the outpatient waiting list, it is anticipated that the target will be 12 months. The majority of those clients on the waiting list are waiting less than 12 months. It is the next biggest task for GRUHG and staff will put in same effort to clear these waiting lists as they have done for the inpatient waiting lists.

W41Q1016, Cllr P Conneely, Private Health Insurance – Income Collection

Cllr Conneely felt that a significant amount of money was still owed to the HSE, in particular at a time when hospitals need the money. He felt that consultants should be denied access to private beds in public hospitals.

T Canavan advised that over last nine months there has been a huge level of co-operation between clinical and administration staff in dealing with this backlog. The efforts of clinical staff are evident in dealing with waiting list progress. The RDO acknowledged the councillor’s concerns and agreed that provisions could be sought in new Consultant agreement.

396/41/12 Motions

Motions postponed from the June Regional Health Forum West meeting were dealt with first.

Order of Business	NUMBER	MOTION	PROPOSED BY
1	W40M253	That this Forum requests that The HSE identify all areas in the country where measles immunisation rates pose a threat to a measles outbreak	<i>Cllr Brian Meaney</i>
This motion was lost as the member was not present			
2	W40M254	That the HSE West ban the use of carcinogenic causing products in all HSE properties both indoor and outdoor as soon as possible in line with the recent ban on smoking at HSE properties.	<i>Cllr. Tony Mulqueen</i>
This motion was deferred to the next meeting			
3	W40M255	That this Forum receive a full report/presentation on the status of the Primary Care Strategy for Galway City and County and where exactly that strategy is at including the current position re primary care teams actually functioning in the area and the make up of same.	<i>Cllr Catherine Connolly</i>
This motion was proposed by Cllr Connolly, seconded by Cllr John Kennedy and adopted. Agreed: The motion will be amended to include all HSE West areas. The five area managers will be requested to brief members on progress in their own areas, at their next local briefings, including a written report to be circulated to all members as soon as possible.			

Notice of Motions submitted for the September RHF Meeting.

1	W41M256	I propose when any review of services take place that patient or service users representative should be part of it. As some services seem to be designed or based on the service provider.	<i>Cllr Tomás Mannion</i>
This motion was proposed by Cllr Tomás Mannion, seconded by Cllr Mary Hoade and adopted.			
2	W41M257	That this Forum receives full clarification in relation to the current position in relation to the provision of Aids/Appliances by the HSE West in Galway City and County and how the said provision operates and whether there are waiting lists and/or priority lists and clarification on how it could arise that a young teenage girl with cerebral palsy would be refused a replacement walking aid/frame.	<i>Cllr Catherine Connolly</i>
This motion was proposed by Cllr Catherine Connolly, seconded by Cllr Tomás Mannion and adopted. Agreed: A written response will issue directly to Cllr Connolly from C Cunningham on the individual case referred to in the motion.			

397/41/12 Financial Briefing

John Hennessy briefed members on the HSE West finances, including service plan priorities, control measures, absenteeism, WTEs, activity and priorities.

Members raised the following queries:

- Are delayed discharges a result of delayed consultant sign off on private health insurance claims?
- Last year there was a reduced budget in the Midwest, we want to make sure it doesn't happen in 2013. What is the situation with an overrun, will an overrun be carried forward? Can we have assurances that there will be no impact on existing services?
- What are the further cost containment measures planned? Outpatient waiting lists have now worsened at GUH? What are the bed numbers in UCH and MPH?
- While it is good news that we are 6% ahead of home care package targets, there is still concern that people are waiting or will have to wait for a package. Is anyone still waiting?
- What are the financial figures for UHG and Roscommon?
- Is GUH's budget overdrawn by €17m? How does this compare with last year? Are 'rolling theatres' less theatre access but using them more effectively?
- Some members resented the suggestion that public sector works are lazy; people get sick.
- Blaming consultants for delays on income collection from private health insurers is a lazy analysis. There are 17 parts to the claim form, a consultant's signature is a factor, but there are many proud consultants who complete the entire form themselves. The main issue is with the insurance companies, they sometimes return claim forms for simple reasons, i.e. the name of the hospital
- What are the finance figures for Portiuncula, some members requested they be presented separately.
- Is there a change in policy in relation to providing information to Forum members? This Forum should get all information. Some information is provided at Forum meetings and some at local briefings. Briefings are private, the Forum is public. Would like to see full picture.
- What is the breakdown of Ennis / Nenagh overrun? Frontline services need to be increased. It is disappointing that the Crisis Nursing Service is being affected in Ennis.
- What is the position regarding the eight Palliative care beds at Roscommon?

Some members agreed with Cllr Finnerty's support for those public sector workers who are on sick leave and acknowledged the Councillor's own clear attendance record of 34 years as a public sector worker.

Managers responded as follows:

The RDO advised that it is the intention of the HSE to bring services, which don't have the funding, back to service plan activity levels, and if possible, treat more patients without admissions, therefore keeping bed numbers down. There is a productive theatre project underway which should improve efficiency by synchronising start times of theatre. This enables the same number of patients to be operated on with less theatres open.

Delayed discharges can occur occasionally where a client's home care package is delayed or their Fair Deal process is not finalised. There were 20 delayed discharges in July 2012, the aim is to reduce this to nil.

L Minihan advised that the national target for debtor days is 115 days. The aim is to get this target down to 60 days. Health Insurer's insist on the consultant's signature on the claim form. There is agreement to deal with this in new consultant talks.

B Maher reminded members that a briefing was held recently for them to discuss finances. Overall GRUHG has delivered more activity with less staff and with worse waiting lists, ED. GRUHG knows what it needs to do and will do it. The public sector / health workers are working hard, under extraordinary circumstances and under intense media scrutiny.

The RDO advised that all hospitals are under intense pressure in 2012. There are implications for how that pressure is dealt with within the system. The approach is to treat, see and diagnose as many patients as possible with reduced costs. The only way to achieve real cost reduction is to reduce bed numbers while increasing activity. The targets are clear in service plan activity and we are working in accordance with the plan.

Many staff have excellent service and attendance, a small number don't. It's the same with the small number of consultants who are not completing claim forms. We are tackling those causing problems and not demonising them all.

B Gloster accepted the advocacy from Cllr McNamara regarding the Crisis Nursing Service and advised that no decision or action has yet been made. The Director of Nursing has said any change service will improve services.

C Cunningham advised members that a business case for the eight Palliative Care beds has been finalised and submitted for sign off by the Minister. Once agreement is reached in terms of a site at Roscommon, the next step will be to complete a licence agreement.

The RDO advised that it is the objective of the HSE to be as transparent as possible in providing information. In some areas Hospitals are now managed as groups, each with a different model. We will have to look at the bigger picture and how we deal with providing information.

Agreed: T Canavan will revert to Cllr C Connolly with bed numbers at UCH and MPH.

Agreed: The invitation to meet with Midwest PCCC is extended to Cllr Tony Mulqueen.

Agreed: L Minihan will issue comparison details for last year to Cllr M Hoade.

Agreed: GRUHG figures will be included at the next financial briefing to members.

Agreed: A Doherty will respond directly to Cllr McNamara and all Midwest members on Midwest queries.

391/40/12 Next Meeting of the Regional Health Forum West

The next meeting of the Forum will take place on Tuesday, 27th November 2012, commencing at 1.00pm in Room 1, Education Centre, Merlin Park, Galway.

The next Forum Committee meeting will take place on 11th December, 2012 in Limerick.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Cathairleach/Chairman

Adopted at Regional Health Forum Meeting on Tuesday 27th November 2012