

**HSE Briefing note for the PAC re Owenacurra Centre, Midleton, Cork**

**March 2022**



## Briefing note re Owenacurra Centre, Midleton, March 2022

The Owenacurra Centre is a Mental Health Services Continuing Care unit in Midleton, Co. Cork and is registered with the Mental Health Commission to provide a service to 24 people for Psychiatry of Later Life, continuing mental health care and mental health rehabilitation. There are currently eleven people remaining as residents in the Centre from the initial 19.

The plan for the Owenacurra Centre was to refurbish the building so as to bring it to a standard that allows for the provision of care and recovery which a modern service should provide and one that matches the care being provided there. Works in Owenacurra Centre were tendered in 2020. These works were suspended in March 2020 given the outbreak of Covid-19 in Ireland. More recently, and with the ability for HSE “normal services” to be recommissioned, the works required in Owenacurra were revisited.

Given the unacceptable deficiencies in the accommodation, the extensive level of investment required to provide a Centre that responds to and meets all of our client’s needs, the age and construction of the building (i.e. a Roh-fab building developed in the 1970’s), the restricted size of the site, essential systems such as heating, electrics, building fabric etc. all beyond end of useful life and the premises falling significantly short of the Governments Climate Action Plan requirements, the decision regarding investment of significant funding into a building which would still not bring the unit up to an acceptable accommodation standard for residents became clear and the decision to close the unit became obvious. Issues that would remain unresolved in the Centre included inadequately sized residents’ bedrooms as well as a lack of social spaces, therapeutic spaces and essential staff support accommodation.

Given the significant number of buildings and facilities operated by the HSE, individual maintenance budgets are not allocated on a facility-by-facility basis. However, the Owenacurra Centre is maintained by a Maintenance Dept covering a geographical area known as “Cork North”. The maintenance budgets for Cork North for each year (2016 – 2021) are included below. The full allocation of the maintenance budget was expended each year (2016 – 2021), with the exception of 2020 when 89% of the maintenance budget was expended due to maintenance resources being assigned to deliver the emergency infrastructural works required to respond to the threat posed to the public by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1 below provides a summary of maintenance expenditure in the Cork North Geographical area within Cork/Kerry Community health organisation

<i>Year</i>	<i>Cork North Maintenance Budget</i>
<i>2016</i>	<i>€939,022.00</i>
<i>2017</i>	<i>€939,022.00</i>
<i>2018</i>	<i>€988,605.00</i>
<i>2019</i>	<i>€988,605.00</i>
<i>2020</i>	<i>€988,605.00</i>
<i>2021</i>	<i>€988,605.00</i>

In addition, Cork/Kerry CHO contribute revenue funding to fund maintenance on minor works.

Table 2 below summarises revenue funding spent each year since 2016 on maintenance items and minor works specifically in Owenacurra.

<i>Year</i>	<i>CKCH Maintenance Spend</i>
<i>2016</i>	<i>€57,275.30</i>
<i>2017</i>	<i>€67,941.93</i>
<i>2018</i>	<i>€55,982.46</i>
<i>2019</i>	<i>€73,275.54</i>
<i>2020</i>	<i>€42,475.89</i>
<i>2021</i>	<i>€62,491.00</i>

The priority for the service remains to provide the required supports to the remaining residents of the centre. We continue to work with each resident individually and consult with their families to agree an appropriate alternative placement based on their assessed needs and their will and preference. Residents are moving on a phased basis and the work with each resident is on-going.

The emphasis on supporting people with mental health needs is to remain independently living where possible in their own homes and communities. A location has been identified to restore the day service in the town and the work is on-going in progressing the negotiations around these premises.

While the original timeline for the closure of the centre was 6 months, this has been extended to ensure that additional time is provided for the transition of residents to appropriate settings. Even though the number of residents within the Owenacurra Centre has decreased to eleven, the staff complement remains as it was with nineteen residents.

### Glenwood House, Carrigaline

The service is aware of recent media coverage connecting the closure of Owenacurra with the acquisition of Glenwood House, Carrigaline (which was a 14 bed Guest House and intended to be used as a Mental Health Community Residence. The property was purchased by the HSE in the context of Covid 19 and the significant shortcomings in the stock of residential services in Cork. The purchase would enable the management of vulnerable cohort of Mental Health Clients. This proposal formed part of the Emergency Planning of the Mental Health services Cork Kerry Community Healthcare. The purchase provided additional space for our residents with single en-suite rooms and a high standard of social space. The premises is well located given its access to services, transport, etc. and was considered as a replacement for Mental Health Community Residents type accommodation initially.

HSE have requested auctioneers working on their behalf to bring any properties of this nature in both the Cork city and county regions to the attention of HSE for their review for potential health uses.

A large number of properties are reviewed annually however, in terms of multi-bed residential properties, eleven other properties listed for sale were reviewed during 2020/2021, six in the east-Cork area, two in Cork city, two in the east cork suburbs and one in the north Cork suburbs.

Nine of the properties were deemed unsuitable and were not pursued further, one was purchased by HSE and is in the process of being converted to provide older person residential beds. The remaining property was in the process of being purchased by HSE, but the sale did not close out during the legal process.

Glenwood House in Carrigaline was purchased by the HSE on the open market. It was advertised for sale in the *Irish Examiner in August 2020* by Michael Pigott Auctioneers. HSE Estates viewed the property in September 2020 with an independent auctioneer who provided a valuation for the property. In accordance with the HSE Property Protocol, a Property Transaction Application Form (PTAF) providing the business case for the purchase of the property was submitted for Property Review Group (PRG) for approval in October 2020 and approval to purchase the property for €0.75m was received at the start of November 2020.

Further to commentary in the media, the service wishes to be very clear in relation to the process followed. At a very early point, a potential conflict of interest was declared by a senior manager in the CHO Mental Health service, as that person had a family connection to this property. On the service side, and to ensure there was no conflict of interest, all matters in relation to the proposed purchase were dealt with by a different senior manager and the Chief Officer. The senior manager in the CHO mental health service had no involvement in the process.

The property represents an opportunity for service users of Mental Health Services in Cork to experience high quality accommodation in a community residential setting. As the planning for service to be established in Glenwood has proceeded, the service can confirm that the residence will be supported by a new rehabilitation consultant being appointed to services in Cork. Mental Health Services has applied for Planning Permission in relation to the premises and a decision on this application is expected shortly. If the Permission is granted, the service will proceed with the identification of the particular service users who may take up residence in the unit, based on their assessed needs and their will and preference. These service users will be included in planning the final refurbishment \ redecoration of the unit. The Service will also resume its engagement with the local Residents Association in relation to the introduction of the service to the community.

### Joint Committee on Health Site Visit 7<sup>th</sup> March

The Health Services Executive welcomes the visit of the Joint Committee on Health to Owenacurra and St. Stephen's Hospital on the 7<sup>th</sup> March. The service looks forward to engaging with the members of the Committee and to assisting the members with their understanding of the service.