

6th March 2024

Deputy Brendan Griffin, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PQ ref 9040/24:

“To ask the Minister for Health the impediments that exist to the opening of more beds at West Kerry Community Hospital; if the recruitment of additional health care assistants is a feasible option in the event of additional nursing staff being unavailable for recruitment; if this option has been explored previously; if so, the outcome of any such exploration; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

Dear Deputy Griffin,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

West Kerry Community Hospital (WKCH) provides 24-hour nursing care to both male and female residents whose dependencies range from moderate to maximum care needs. Long-term care, respite, convalescence and palliative care is provided. The hospital is currently registered to accommodate 46 residents.

The hospital has experienced nursing staff shortages on occasion as a result of retirements and various other categories of leave. Unscheduled leave and staff resignations/retirements can temporarily impact staffing levels at the hospital but we constantly endeavour to mitigate deficits and ensure that safe staffing levels are maintained against the background of the current recruitment pause and the limited supply of candidates in the area.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare is committed to augmentation of service provision for the local community by maintaining the staffing complement at WKCH. Extensive efforts continue to recruit staff for the hospital against the background of the current HSE recruitment pause and the significant challenges that recruitment to community hospitals in rural locations presents.

In 2023, to address shortages, various recruitment campaigns were launched and WKCH has now returned to staffing levels which meet operational requirements. In the same time period recruitment of Health Care Assistants was not required as no deficit was identified.

West Kerry Community Hospital (WKCH) provides a valuable service to people living in the West Kerry area and we are committed to continuously reviewing our services in line with population health planning and Sláintecare principles to facilitate the ongoing development of modern services across the

West Kerry region. There is further available capacity within the hospital, however we would need to recruit sufficient staff numbers to open these beds and we would also need to seek registration of additional beds with HIQA. Provision of additional beds at WKCH will require availability of sufficient staff with the necessary qualifications, skills and experience within appropriate safe staffing and skill mix parameters to ensure delivery of safe high-quality care to our residents at all times.

I trust this clarifies the position. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Jackie Daly
Head of Service for Older People

