

**Deputy Thomas Pringle  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2**

**25<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**PQ ref 4118/24 - To ask the Minister for Health why the HSE have seen fit to close residential beds for people with enduring mental illness in the SRU unit in Carndonagh. leaving Inishowen without the service of residential beds; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Pringle

I refer to your recent correspondence. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position of Donegal Mental Health Service.

Radharc na Sleibhhte in Carndonagh is in the process of transitioning from a residential service to a community service. There has been a national policy in place for some years now within mental health services to reduce the level of service users residing in congregated settings. There is also a new draft Mental Health Act to be progressed shortly that requires residential settings to meet higher standards of care.

The policy of moving away from institutional living is a longstanding goal of successive government policies over the last number of decades and replacing the institutional settings with appropriate community support structures to promote independent and integrated living within communities. This project will be a hugely positive step towards achieving this for the people of Inishowen.

Donegal Mental Health Services (DMHS) have been preparing to meet their obligations under these standards and part of that process is the transition of Radharc na Sleibhhte to meet the needs of the community into the future. It would be a retrograde step for the HSE to commit to restoring an institutional setting when the opportunity is here to progress services in a positive way. Rather than closing the facility DMHS have identified the need for a seven-day outreach service to support those who require it to remain in their own home and integrate with their local community.

This is a recovery based model promoting independence, hope and choice for all and will be a further development of the wellness café and nature walks that have been developed over the last few years.

We also plan to develop a day hospital service for more acute short term service users, similar to that available in Letterkenny for many years, which has been very successful in reducing the level of admissions that have been required to the Department of Psychiatry. This will support some of those with acute conditions to receive appropriate interventions while continuing to live in their own home and with their families.

We have been searching for respite accommodation in the area but unfortunately have been unable to find suitable accommodation. We now plan to use part of the building to provide this service. As I am sure you will be aware, the building is of an older style and will require some upgrading works over a period of time; however most of these services will be able to commence immediately and the upgrade works will be done alongside the delivery of the services as resources become available.

Kindly note this response was held due to Fórsa Industrial Action which has now been lifted.

I hope this information will help to address the concerns raised.

Yours sincerely



**Pauline Ackermann**

General Manager

Mental Health Services CHO1 CDLMS