

## **MINUTES** **MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

**Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 at 11am**  
**Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Cork**

### **Present:**

Clr Ann Marie Ahern  
Clr Audrey Buckley\*  
Clr Declan Burgess\*  
Clr Peter Cleere  
Clr Danny Collins\*  
Clr John Coonan  
Clr Michael Doran\*  
Clr Pat Dunphy\*  
Clr Pat Fitzgerald\*  
Clr Michael Foley\*  
Clr Stephanie Keating\*

Clr Niall Kelleher\*  
Clr Roger Kennedy  
Clr Mary Lenihan Foley  
Clr Eileen Lynch\*  
Clr Michael McCarthy  
Clr Susan McCarthy\*  
Clr Arthur McDonald  
Clr Norma Moriarty\*  
Clr Sean O'Donovan  
Clr John Sheehan\*  
Clr Mikey Sheehy\*

### **Apologies:**

Clr Jody Power  
Clr Garry Laffan

### **In Attendance:**

Dr Andy Philips, Regional Executive Officer, HSE South West  
Dr Gerard O'Callaghan, Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group  
Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare  
Ms Anna Marie Lanigan, Head of Primary Care, South East Community Healthcare  
Ms Fiona Murphy, Chief Executive, HSE National Screening Programme  
Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

### **1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

On the proposal of Cllr Roger Kennedy seconded by Cllr Michael McCarthy, the minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were adopted by members.

### **2. Chairperson's Correspondence**

No correspondence. Cllr McDonald Chairman thanked Members and Management for their support and co-operation over the last period of the Regional Health Forum.

### **3. Committees**

The next Committee meetings:

- (a) South East Committee Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024 in Kilkenny
- (b) South West Committee Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024 in Cork

### **4. Notices of Motion**

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

"That a podiatry clinic run for in patients at Cahersiveen Community Hospital be extended to outpatients from the area to ensure they do not have to travel to Tralee to avail of such a service."

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

Cllr Moriarty thanked HSE Management for their reply. She asked whether vacant posts were as a result of the lack of skills/podiatrists or as a result of the recruitment embargo.

In reply Ms Tess O'Donovan stated that there were challenges as a result of the recruitment pause. However there is an overall shortage of trained podiatry graduates - at present University College Galway is the only college which offers a podiatry course. As with other healthcare courses across the country there is a need to increase the number of third level training places available to increase capacity on a sustainable basis. The further and higher education sector has a critical role to play in ensuring that healthcare services have the staff they need to deliver the care that people need.

It is also important to examine how best to deliver the service having regard for limited resources and this may mean having to bring clients to a central clinic location.

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

"That's this Forum writes to CORU – Regulating Health & Social Care Professionals to query the current delays being experienced by physiotherapists who are returning to Ireland to work from the UK in registering."

A written response from CORU was circulated to members and noted. CORU is continuously developing and improving processes to ensure timely recognition / registration of applicants. It should also be noted that registration is a document based process and requires applicants to submit the required documentation in the first instance. At times

there may be delays with progressing registration as a result of incomplete or missing information.

(c) Cllr Eileen Lynch moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"Can the HSE outline the number of children awaiting assessment of needs assessments under the Disability Act 2005 in CHO4 and the current waiting times."

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

Cllr Lynch acknowledged the comprehensive reply from HSE Management. She had a number of follow-on queries in relation to age limits for assessments, the average timeframe from desktop review to clinical assessment and guidelines for completion of assessments.

In reply Ms Tess O'Donovan stated that she would arrange to revert directly to Cllr Lynch in relation to timeframes.

Ms O'Donovan advised that Assessment of Need under the Disability Act (2005) are carried out in chronological order based upon date of receipt of completed application. The numbers of applications for Assessment of Need under the Act have risen steadily over the last number of years. The availability of appropriate staff to complete diagnostic assessments is critical. We are actively working (within available resources) to reduce waiting times.

Children do not require a diagnosis or Assessment of Need to access health services within the HSE. Parents/guardian can refer their child directly to their local Primary Care Service or Children's Disability Network Team.

(d) Cllr Danny Collins moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"I'm calling on the HSE to provide the BreastCheck Truck to come to Bantry at least once a year if not more."

A written response from Ms Lynne Caffrey, Senior Communications Officer, National Screening Service was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Collins thanked the National Screening Service for their reply. He outlined concerns in relation to insufficient mobile screening units/services and particularly in rural areas. Cllr Collins stated that there should be additional investment in mobile screening units. This was supported by a number of other Members. In addition the reduction in the screening age by BreastCheck (from 50 years to 40 years) was raised.

In reply Fiona Murphy, Chief Executive, HSE National Screening Programme, advised that they strongly encourage all eligible women (aged 50 to 69 years) to come forward for screening. In their scheduling of areas, BreastCheck ensure that eligible women are on the same 2 year cycle. There was a delay as a result of the Covid pandemic (and associated restrictions) and there has been a catch-up programme. There are between 21-24 mobile units in operation and the focus available resources is to reach greater concentrations of eligible women.

BreastCheck welcome support in relation to identifying suitable site locations and are working to develop more fixed locations which would in turn free up mobile units for more rural areas. With regard to the suggestion of lowering the age of screening,

BreastCheck have put forward a proposal to lower the age to 45 years (as per European recommendation).

There were a number of inputs from Members who were all supportive of the screening programme and who wished to see the programme expanded.

BreastCheck is working with community groups to increase awareness and also have ads on social media to increase awareness of the programme. With regard to the 2 year cycle for screening, Fiona Murphy advised members that there is a 3 year cycle for screening in Northern Ireland/UK. Ms Murphy BreastCheck thanked Members for their support and considerable interest in the screening programme. She asked that in their role as public representatives that they increase awareness of the BreastCheck Programme among their constituents.

## **5. Questions**

(a) Cllr Declan Burgess put forward the following question:

"The HSE Civil Registration Service is vital to the community in Cashel and District. Currently due to a recent retirement the service has ceased operation and hasn't been able continue due to the recruitment embargo. Can the HSE advise on the future of this service and what plans they have to return this service to the locality in Cashel."

A written response from Ms Stephanie Lynch, Acting Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Burgess acknowledged the written reply. He cited his disappointment with the temporary cessation of the service and queried whether there was a timeline for the resumption of civil registration services in Cashel. Ms Anna Marie Lanigan in response advised that unfortunately it was not possible at this time to give an affirmative timeframe. Ms Lanigan stated that the Civil Registration post is a priority area for the derogation process.

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

"Can we get an update from the National Ambulance Service on plans to extend the number of bases they have in the South Kerry area?"

A written response from Mr Robert Morton, Director, National Ambulance Service was circulated to members and noted. Mr Morton also outlined Ambulance activity in the South Kerry area. Whilst any developments require capital funding, the Ambulance Service are examining a number of innovative options. Mr Morton informed Members that that he had visited South Kerry and engaged with stakeholders on related matters.

Cllr Moriarty noted the reply and stated that she would absolutely support any action to acquire a building (subject to capital finance) in the Kilorglin area. Cllr Moriarty was delighted that Ambulance Management had visited the area to see the situation on the ground. Cllr Moriarty also noted the collaborative working with the Department of Defence.

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

“Some children with autism and special needs were cut off from full services during the pandemic. Early intervention is key in these areas. Does the HSE have a plan to address their requirements going forward in terms of assessments and care?”

A written response from Ms Tess O’Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Ms O’Donovan stated that if this related to particular individual case in the community that she would be happy for Cllr Sheehy to make direct contact on the matter and that she would follow-up.

(d) Cllr Eileen Lynch put forward the following question:

“Can the HSE provide an update in relation to when the Millstreet Hospital works will reach completion and be formally opened.”

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

Cllr Lynch thanked HSE Management for the comprehensive reply. She had further queries in relation to the process for phased opening, HIQA registration and staffing. With regard to staff recruitment, Ms Tess O’Donovan advised that recruitment commenced last year. Whilst the ideal would be to open all the beds together, however there is a need to consider practicalities including staffing which may necessitate a phased opening of the beds.

**6. Date and Time of next meeting** - 21<sup>st</sup> June 2024 at 11am. Venue: Council Chambers, Cork County Council, County Hall, Cork