



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Rannán Gnóthaí Parlaiminte
Oifig an Ard-Stiúrthóra
Bloc D, 2 urlár
Ionad Gnó Gheata na Páirce
Sráid Gheata na Páirce
Baile Átha Cliath 8
Teil. (01) 635 2505
Facs (01) 635 2508
Rphost: pad@hse.ie

Health Service Executive
Parliamentary Affairs Division
Office of the Director General
Block D, 2nd floor
Parkgate Business Centre
Parkgate Street
Dublin 8
Tel: (01) 635 2505
Fax: (01) 635 2508
Email: pad@hse.ie

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Mr Pat Fannin,
Committee Secretariat,
Public Accounts Committee,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

Re: (Ref: S0522 PAC33)

Dear Mr Fannin,

I refer to your recent correspondence to Mr. Paul Reid, Chief Executive Officer, Health Service Executive and the request for information regarding mental health facilities in Cork.

Please see below briefing note on the matters raised and copies of the information requested.

If any further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Ray Mitchell
Assistant National Director
Parliamentary Affairs Division

Encl.

Briefing Note for the Public Accounts Committee

1. All building reports, including fire safety and asbestos reports, relating to acute and long-stay psychiatric wards in St. Stephen's Hospital, Glanmire and St. Catherine's ward, St. Finbarr's Hospital, Cork from January 2011 to the present.

Please find attached all fire safety reports and asbestos reports for the relevant units in St Stephen's Hospital, and in St Catherine's Ward in St Finbarr's Hospital (files are saved in attachment 'A.1 Building reports') from 2011.

As with all building related works, fire safety is an integral part of the planning and construction process. Over the last number of years, projects have been undertaken in St Stephen's Hospital (including units 2, 3, 4 and 8 (floor 2)), and in St Catherine's ward, with particular emphasis on fire safety following fire safety risk assessments undertaken in 2014, 2015 and 2017.

These works included:

- Fire alarm installation and upgrades;
- Emergency lighting installation and upgrades;
- Fire compartment upgrade works;
- Fire door installation and upgrade works;
- Upgrading external fire escapes routes.

As funding is allocated (capital/minor capital/revenue) risk items on the fire safety reports are addressed. Where this is not possible (owing to operational restraints or budget limitations) these risks are managed on a prioritised basis by local management through staff training and fire safety management practices.

A fire safety management programme is an on-going iterative process and updated fire safety risk assessments have been recently undertaken (September 2021, also attached). The findings of these reports will form part of continuing upgrade works.

In relation to asbestos management, again this is an on-going process. The existing surveys are attached with further surveys scheduled this year also.

2. An account of all works undertaken in this ten-year period across each facility.

A breakdown of all works undertaken in these units is included (Excel file attached, saved as '*Works Undertaken & Maintenance Budgets*', tab '*Question 2 & 3*'). Please note these are works from 2012 (and not the requested 2011) as the HSE Capital Payments System was implemented in 2012 allowing access to this information from 2012 onwards. Considerable additional time would be required to review archived, paper based files for 2011.

3. The exact investment in each facility for that ten-year period.

The level of investment for the works outlined in 2 above is also included in the same Excel attachment (tab '*Works Undertaken & Maintenance Budgets*').

4. All maintenance budgets for these long-stay and acute psychiatric wards in St. Stephen's Hospital and St. Catherine's ward, as well as the maintenance budget for the Owenacurra Centre Midleton since January 2016.

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, St Catherine's is maintained by a Maintenance Department covering a geographical area known as Cork South, whilst St Stephen's and the Owenacurra Centre are maintained by a Maintenance Department covering a geographical area known as Cork North. The maintenance budgets for Cork North and Cork South for each year (2016 – 2021 YTD) are included (Excel file attached, saved as '*Works Undertaken & Maintenance Budgets*', tab '*Question 4 & 5*').

5. The proportion of these maintenance budgets across each campus that was spent for each year since 2016.

The full allocation of the maintenance budgets was expended every year (2016 – 2020), with the exception of 2020 when 89% of the maintenance budgets were expended due to maintenance resources being assigned to deliver the emergency infrastructural works required to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. Expenditure to date in 2021 confirms we are on course for full commitment of the current year's budget.

6. The costings and detailed drawings for a refurbishment of the Owenacurra Centre, Midleton, Cork that was completed in 2020.

Works for the Owenacurra Centre (and for the Midleton Community Hospital) were jointly tendered in 2020. The tender report and Architectural drawings are attached (files are saved in attachment '*A.6 Costings & Plans Owenacurra Centre*'). Within Owenacurra Centre, one of the primary reasons for commissioning these works, was in response to a need to separate day services from residential services. Given the restricted nature of the premises and the site, clients currently accessing day services must travel to/from the day unit via residents' living accommodation which impacted on our residents' rights to privacy and dignity.

More recently, with the ability for HSE 'normal services' to be recommissioned, the works required in Owenacurra were revisited and it was identified that inherent, fundamental and unacceptable matters would remain unresolved for our clients and staff. For example, a continuance of our clients living in cramped bedrooms of 7.5m² with no ensuite, when the current standard is 22m² (including an ensuite).

As well as the residents' bedrooms, considerable other issues would also remain unresolved including a lack of social spaces, therapeutic spaces and essential staff support accommodation.

There are a range of other unacceptable deficiencies and issues with the accommodation. These include the extensive level of investment required to provide a centre that responds to and meets all of our clients' 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 and, essential systems such as heating, electrics, building fabric etc. all beyond end of useful life. In this context, 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 unfortunate decision to close the unit became obvious.

7. An account of any building works recommended by the Mental Health Commission or by building reports for the Owenacurra Centre since January 2016 that were not undertaken.

The Mental Health Commission (MHC) reports are available on the MHC website: <https://www.mhcirl.ie/publications>. A summary of the MHC building recommendations as well as building reports undertaken on the condition of the Owenacura Centre are attached (files are saved in attachment '*A.7 MHC Report and Bldg Reports Owenacurra Centre*').

HSE
October 2021