

Speech by
Minister for State
Seán Canney T.D.

Commencement Matter – Seanad Éireann

22nd June 2016

‘The need for the Minister for Health to give assurances to the people of Roscommon that the Primary Care Centre in Monksland will remain under the HSE West and not be moved under any circumstance to the control of HSE (Community Health Organisation CHO8) which serves counties Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Louth and Meath and that he assures the people of Roscommon that this is not another attack on the integrity of the County of Roscommon.’ - Senator Terry Leyden

I want to thank Senator Leyden for raising this issue. I am taking this debate on behalf of my colleague Minister Simon Harris, who is elsewhere on Government business.

The development of an enhanced primary care system and guaranteeing the future sustainability of GP practices in rural and disadvantaged urban areas are priorities under the Programme for Government and an important element in the health reform process. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that people get the care they need as close to home as possible, and have access to a greater range of health and social care services in their community.

Following the decision in 2013 to organise the country’s acute hospitals into a number of hospital groups, the HSE was requested to review the structures then in place for the delivery of non-acute services. A thorough review was commenced in 2013 and completed in 2014. This examined international experience with the implementation of integrated health and social care, with a particular focus on achieving successful integration. The review also involved consultation with providers and users of health services, as well as the public services including the local authority, education and justice systems.

The review rigorously evaluated options, taking into account the requirement for appropriate care pathways between primary care and acute services, the planned hospital groups and local authority boundaries. It also focused on what would benefit the provision of integrated care to the general

population and support the implementation of Government policy on the care of older people, people with a disability and those in need of mental health services.

The review concluded that achieving integrated care means that services must be planned and delivered with patients' needs and wishes as the organising principle and that integrated care can make a real difference to the quality of care and hence patient outcomes.

After a careful evaluation of option, the recommended approach was to restructure the 17 Integrated Service Areas into nine Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs).

The HSE has, since 2014, been proceeding with a detailed implementation plan which positions primary care at the centre of delivering services and will see the establishment of around 90 Primary Care Networks of health and social care professionals, each serving a common population of, on average, about 50,000 people.

It is very important to stress that, from the point of view of people using the wide range of services provided by the HSE at community level, the management structures which overlay these should be of little or no consequence. The objective is to ensure that services are responsive to people's needs and enable them to receive a joined-up service that results in the most favourable health outcomes for patients. The HSE has indicated that Monksland Primary Care Centre is currently located in CHO Area 2 (Mayo/Galway/Roscommon) and that no decision has been made to transfer this Centre to CHO Area 8.

I understand that there are four GPs based in the Centre and that other services based there include public health nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, social work, psychology and mental health services. Other services use the Centre for clinics. This is very much in line with the policy of Government whereby we want people to be able to access the great majority of their healthcare needs in the community, and as far as possible in one location.