

Awaiting the publication of the HSE Service Plan serious and profound questions need to be answered

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Older & Bolder welcomes the imminent publication of the HSE Service Plan as the delay has led to anxiety amongst those who may bear the brunt of proposed cuts. While welcoming the reported 'ring fenced' funding of primary and community care services, serious questions need to be answered about the reported closure of up to 600 public beds.

Patricia Conboy Director of Older & Bolder, said today, 'I welcome the reported "ring-fencing" of Minister Shortall's areas of responsibility and congratulate her on achieving the important protection of vital services in the areas of primary and community care. I also welcome Minister of State for Health Kathleen Lynch's signal that the outlook for older people is more positive than had been expected. But despite these assurances I remain deeply concerned at the reported proposal to close up to 600 public beds in community nursing units. This would be totally unacceptable and would create hardship both for individuals and their families. Where are these people to go? What will happen to those attending these nursing units? While Older & Bolder as part of the "Make Home Work – The Right to Age Well at home" campaign encourages as far as is possible the right of older people to age at home, this cannot be achieved without supports. I ask now is older people's safety to be compromised if services are to be depleted by the closure of community hospital beds?

What many may not realise is that these units not only provide long term beds for older residents but also provide vital and valuable supports for those older people living at home such as respite, step down for people coming out of hospital and palliative care support. What is going to happen to services then which are provided as part of community hospital provision? I am urging the Ministers for Health and the Minister for Older People to reverse these proposals as a matter of urgency. I ask them to consider the long term effects and to ensure that all policy relating to older people in the area of health and supports is connected and designed to ensure that older people can live well and safely at home and within their communities.'

For further information please contact Roisin Boyd 087 798 9139

OLDER & BOLDER NOTE TO EDITOR

The promotion of an age friendly and age inclusive society in Ireland is a core goal of Older & Bolder, an alliance of eight NGOs in the age sector. The member organisations are: Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Carers Association, Irish Hospice Foundation, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, Older Women's Network and Third Age/Senior Help Line