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146. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the **Minister for Health** when he will visit a home (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33220/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

In June 2011, the Report “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings” was published by the Health Service Executive (HSE), which identified that in 2008 approximately 4000 individuals with disabilities lived in congregated type settings. These are places where ten or more people reside in a single living unit or are campus based. It found that, notwithstanding the commitment and initiative of dedicated staff and management, there were a significant number of people still experiencing institutional living conditions where they lacked basic privacy and dignity, and lived their lives apart from any community and family.

Currently, 2725 people live in congregated settings and our objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings.

St John of God Services in Kerry has been identified as one of the priority sites for de-congregation. The HSE is committed to working with St John of God Services to transition 17 residents in ward style accommodation from the current unsuitable accommodation on campus to more appropriate settings in the local community. Comprehensive transition plans will ensure that there is extensive engagement with the person themselves, their families, carers and advocates, as well as the service provider, to ensure

successful and sustainable transitions into the community.

Some of the existing residents will benefit from greater opportunities to participate in local communities and will, over time and with proper planning, move to living in the community. It is important to point out that it is Government and HSE policy to move on from these congregated settings in the best interests of patients but this will be done in a planned and phased way and with due regard to the personal choices of every individual. The welfare and dignity of residents is absolutely paramount, and the needs of the individual will be the first consideration.

The focus of the HSE has been on enhancing the quality of life of residents and highlighting the residents who would most obviously benefit from the opportunity to move to community living. In doing so, the HSE are recognising that for some individuals with significant disabilities, this move presents greater challenges and will not be considered for some time.

The Chief Officer has arranged to meet in early November with St John of God management to ensure that communication and engagement with families is improved and that the appropriate discovery processes are in place in advance of plans for any individuals to move to community living, and with the family representatives group to ensure their concerns are being heard and that there is a process in place to work together with them and the service provider into the future in the best interests of the residents.

I am satisfied that the appropriate level of engagement is now underway between St John of Gods and the HSE with the residents, their advocates, and their families. It would be appropriate to allow this process to conclude before considering a visit to the Beaufort campus.

As the HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations on "Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion", I have arranged for the Deputy's question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.