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HSE should halt plan to move people with disabilities - Senator

FG's Paul Coghlan calls for 'more humanity' over proposal for residents of Kerry facility

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Marie O'Halloran

A call has been made for the **HSE** to show “more humanity” and halt plans to move people with mental and physical disabilities who have been living in a care facility for 40 years back into the community.

A pilot scheme has begun to move some of the 77 residents of the St Mary's of the Angels facility in **Killarney**, Co Kerry, back into mainstream community settings.

The scheme is part of a HSE policy which is promoting a new model of residential support for people with disabilities, placing them in ordinary settings with specialised supports to allow them live independently.

However, **Fine Gael** Senator **Paul Coghlan** said that people who had been in what are called “congregated settings” for so long should not be removed from their homes.

“It is their home and it is what they recognise. We will disorient them totally. A stop must be put to this,” he said in the Seanad.

Minister for Health

Mr Coghlan said he would be raising the issue directly with Minister for Health **Simon Harris**.

He said the residents “cannot decide for themselves, and decisions would have to be made by their parents or families.

This will have to be recognised more clearly than it is at present”.

The St Mary’s of the Angels community “has existed for many years and some of the residents have been there for up to 40 years”, he said.

“To treat them as if they can move on . . . is not possible.”

He said that “there must be much more humanity. It would make much more sense for the authorities to reinvest not necessarily huge amounts, but whatever is required and, as required, to rejuvenate the site and make it proper”.

The Kerry-based Senator said he was “sure other sites are affected throughout the country”.