

RELIEF AS VITAL FUNDING SECURED

Saint Mary of the
Angels Beaufort.


Deal on service for 300 with additional needs

Eilish Perryman

■ St John of Gods and HSE reach short- term agreement

■ Funding agreement now in place for this year

THE FUTURE of vital services provided by St John of God to about 300 people with additional needs across Kerry are secure for this year at least, it has been confirmed.

BY AIDAN O'CONNOR

The HSE and St John of God Community Services reached an agreement last week on how services would continue to be funded.

Over 300 adults and children in Kerry avail of services provided by St John of God Community Services which operates across nine Kerry communities, including the St Mary of the Angels residential facility in

Beaufort.

Nationally, St John of God Community Services - part of the wider St John of God Hospital Services Group - is funded by the HSE to provide services to 8,000 children and adults on behalf of the State.

However, the future of these services has been under threat after the HSE was told last month that if a bailout of more than €30 million was not provided, responsibility to run these community services would have to transfer to the State.

The organisation earlier this month gave notice to the HSE that it intended to cease providing these ser-

vices by the middle of August following a "failure" to come to an agreement on funding.

The warning caused grave uncertainty for hundreds of service users in Kerry, their families and loved ones.

Negotiations between SJOG and the HSE over significant funding deficits have been ongoing for years.

The agreement reached last week means that there is a commitment to the in-year funding for 2024, and there is a guaranteed timeframe within which final decisions will be made about the issues arising from the historical deficit in St John of God Community

Services.

In a joint statement on Wednesday, the HSE and St John of God Community Services said the provider would "continue to deliver its full range of services at all existing locations".

Eilish Perryman, whose son Patrick resides at St Mary of the Angels in Beaufort and who is a member of the National Parents and Family Committee, said the deal only provides certainty for the immediate future.

She said that a Sustainable Impact Assessment was carried out - but the report has still not been signed off and given to parents and family members.

"We haven't been told anything about the long-term arrangement. We do not want any further uncertainty around the funding and the vital services," she said.

Kerry TD Michael Healy-Rae said that he was happy a deal had been reached around funding and said it is 'only right and proper that these services continue to be provided to the people who need and deserve them most'.

Deputy Healy-Rae had raised the issue in the Dáil on several occasions and was contacted directly by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar about the deal last week.