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Taoiseach's 'assurance' on St Mary's

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Taoiseach Enda Kenny's assurance that 'no imminent closure' will be forced on St Mary of the Angels care home in Beaufort has done little to assuage the fears of residents' families this week as the controversy over moves to 'decongregate' the St John of God-run facility continue.

Taoiseach Kenny assured the Dáil last week that there would be no imminent closure of the Beaufort centre, responding to concerns raised in Leaders' Questions by Kerry Independent Deputy Michael Healy Rae.

"The Minister of State, Deputy Finian McGrath, announced funding of €20 million in June for the HSE to move people out of congregated settings and that funding will be used to relocate approximately 165 people living in 14 institutions nationally...with regard to St Mary of the Angels, it is important to say that there is no imminent closure involved here," the Taoiseach told the Dáil.

Deputy Healy Rae said he was not 'satisfied' by the assurance, however, stating: "However, the Minister of State, Deputy McGrath, said the HSE had met public representatives and was clear in stating that St Mary of the Angels will close over time...I want the Taoiseach and the Minister of State to come to Kerry

to look at St Mary of the Angels as an example of the service being provided to these people."

Deputy Healy Rae meanwhile said the future appeared bleak for children with profound intellectual disabilities as the HSE move to close down what he described as 'centres of excellence' across Ireland.

Chairman of the SMOA Relatives' Association Jack Fitzpatrick echoed his concern: "What is to happen to children if every facility such as SMOA is closed?"

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