

Annihilus loses 27 jobs as addiction centre for male teens set to close

BY JACKIE KEOGH

WEST Cork's only addiction treatment centre for teenage boys is expected to close in mid-October with the loss of 27 jobs.

Staff at Cara Lodge Residential Treatment Centre at Ahiohill in Enniskeane were informed on Wednesday, September 9th last that it is to close, and they immediately raised the matter with Independent TD Michael Collins.

A socially-distanced meeting with five staff representatives was held in Clonakilty on Sunday, after which Deputy Collins called on the Taoiseach and the Minister for Health to 'intervene and save this service for West Cork.'

The TD told *The Southern Star*: 'The staff are very angry at the way they have been treated. Initially, they were told that there was to be a change of use at the cen-

tre, but this – the loss of their jobs – has come as a bolt out of the blue.'

In addition to the team of professionals who worked with the teenagers, there are other employees, including administration staff, cooks, cleaners and maintenance crews and their jobs will be affected too.

At one stage, the facility – which has been in operation for the last 20 years – dealt with a larger number of youths, but Deputy Collins said the number of residential places had, in recent times, been reduced to offer a free residential programme for six males, ranging in ages from 14 to 18, who have substance abuse issues.

Cara Lodge is run by the Matt Talbot Adolescent Services and is largely funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE). A HSE report on Cara Lodge was carried out in 2019, but its findings have not been

made public. Deputy Collins said the public have a right to read the findings of that report. He said: 'It could clear up a lot about what is happening at Cara Lodge and could potentially safeguard the service, especially as there are so few residential treatment places for teenagers in the country.'

The HSE said that there had been a 50% reduction in referrals to the centre in the last five years: 'It is now necessary to realign services so that we can meet the needs of as many young people as possible ... funding for Matt Talbot Adolescent Services will move from residential services to day services. This will help young people to remain in their own homes and communities while taking part in addiction services.' Regarding the 2019 report, the HSE said it had no bearing on the decision to redirect funding from residential services to non-residential services.

A brand new vision for our towns

BY EMMA CONNOLLY

NEW cycle and walking trails, and less traffic congestion, are key ambitions for potential plans being compiled for West Cork's major towns.

Stakeholders in Clonakilty, Skibbereen, Kinsale and Rosscarbery have, for the past few months, collaborated to develop their visions for their areas.

It's part of a My Town, My Plan Community Training Programme.

The Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence, part of the School of Business at Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) designed and delivered the programme which is funded through Secad.

Dr Helen McGuirk, head of the Hincks Centre said: 'It was all about the participants working together and making collaborative decisions to develop clarity and vision for their individual town ideas.'

See next week's *Southern Star* for more.

50K FOR 50TH RNLi benefits from Pedro!



Peter Walsh, or 'Pedro' as he's known, walked 50km on his 50th birthday to raise funds for the Inchydoney Lifeboat. Peter started at Inchydoney beach last Saturday morning and walked through Sam's Cross, Shannonvale, Ballinascarthy, Timoleague and Courtmacsherry, before finishing at 6pm back at Inchydoney. Peter was joined by his sister Orla, Pat Collins and Kieran O'Regan.

(Photo: Andy Gibson)