



Deputy Catherine Murphy

6th March, 2019

PQ 8622/19

Dear Deputy Murphy,

To ask the Minister for Health the progress made on implementing all aspects of the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 to 2030 that are relevant to his Department and bodies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for a response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The HSE is committed to providing high standards of service through the medium of Irish on an on-going basis, to those patients and service users who wish to be communicated with in Irish. The organisation takes a proactive approach to meeting the needs of the Irish language speaking public, taking into account the underlying demand for Irish language services. Our Irish Language Service supports our Hospital Groups and Community Health Organisations to fulfil their Irish language obligations.

The HSE is only limited in the provision of high quality services through Irish by the availability of proficient Irish Language speaking practitioners. The organisation is acutely aware of the need for Irish language services and has the structures and supports in place to provide these services.

However, there are well known issues with regard to recruitment into the Health Services and these issues are often exacerbated in Gaeltacht areas due to an increase in national urbanisation.

The HSE is committed to a series of actions as set out in the Action Plan 2018-2030 (20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030) published last year by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The HSE is endeavouring to counteract the national recruitment trend by:

- Working in conjunction with the third level education sector to develop modules on care for Irish speaking patients e.g. medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy.



- Working with career guidance associations and Gaelscoileanna to provide material, expertise and workshops outlining careers in the health service through Irish
- The provision of scholarships for Irish speaking students in Health professions, in exchange for a number of years post graduate work with the HSE

There is continued support for the Medical Scholarship Scheme with assistance from Údarás na Gaeltachta. The HSE and Údarás na Gaeltachta co-funded 15 scholarships in 2018, as follows:

- Bachelor of Medicine (MB) of Surgery (BCh) and of Obstetrics (9)
- Occupational Therapy (1)
- Nursing (1)
- Pharmacy (1)
- Speech and Language Therapy (3).

The students are from the following Gaeltacht counties Donegal (3), Mayo (1), Galway (10) and Kerry (1).

Students funded in previous years are currently employed by the HSE in the following services: Speech & Language Therapy (4) in Galway, Donegal and Kerry and Interns/NCHD (2) in Galway University Hospital.

Since 2005 NUIG has provided a specific module of care “Caidreamh le hOthair trí Ghaeilge” for undergraduate nursing students. To date 144 students have successfully completed this module.

Since 2010 NUIG has provided a specific module “Teanga an Leighis” for undergraduate medical students. To date 68 students have successfully completed this module. UCC have commenced a specific Irish module for medical and nursing students.

In addition our service to assist the public to locate particular HSE services is available via the bilingual free-phone and email service from HSELive and from the Medical Card Contact Centre.

Primary Care Teams continue to be developed in the Gaeltacht areas and are supported by the Community Healthcare Organisations and members of the HSE Irish Language Service team.

The HSE recruitment protocol regarding appointments to Gaeltacht Areas continues to be implemented. In this regard five Irish language competency tests were carried out as part of the recruitment process for Social Worker; Physiotherapist and Speech & Language Therapist posts in 2018. In addition three Irish language competency tests will be carried out in March 2019 for Gaeltacht vacancies in Nursing and Physiotherapy.



The HSE continues to support and facilitate the dissemination of language awareness information through relevant ante-natal maternity services in Letterkenny University Hospital, Mayo University Hospital, Galway University Hospital & Kerry General Hospital

The HSE recognises that Gaeltacht Communities have a very specific linguistic requirement and we make every effort to ensure that services pertaining to the Gaeltacht are delivered through the medium of Irish.

Services in Irish are provided in the following facilities:

- Teach Altranais an Fháil Charraigh,
- Otharlann an Chlocháin Léith,
- Áras Rónáin, Ospidéal an Daingin.
- Áras Mhic Dara in an Ceathrú Rua
- Áras Rónáin in Árainn;
- Ospidéal an Daingin.
- Macroom Community Hospital, Co Cork
- Primary Care Service, Daingean Uí Chúis.

In conclusion we would like to emphasise that the HSE is very focused on supporting health services to improve their Irish language service to Irish speaking patients.

I trust this addresses your question. If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,

Mary Brodie
Business Manager, Communications Directorate