



14th December 2020

**Deputy Emer Higgins
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.**

PQ 40971/20 – To ask the Minister for Health if there are plans to roll out the Sligo scheme in terms of cataract treatment to other areas of the country; the financial benefits which would apply if this scheme was rolled out; if waiting lists would be reduced; the timescale for such a roll out; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

-Emer Higgins

Dear Deputy Higgins,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) 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 response.

The Primary Care Eye Services Review Group (PCESRG) Report was launched in June 2017. The Report sets out current levels of service, models of service provision and the consultation process undertaken with patients, advocates, ophthalmic staff and representative bodies. It also highlights the limitations of the current model of service delivery and sets out the way forward for a significant amount of eye services to be delivered in a primary care setting. The Report estimates that 60% of existing outpatient activity including AMD care could be moved to primary care thus enabling hospital services to focus on patients who require more specialist diagnostics or treatments. The National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology has developed a model of care which details how the realignment of eye services from the acute hospitals to the community will be undertaken. The recommendations from the PCESRG Report also complement the Model of Care.

The Primary Care Eye Services Review Group Report remains current and the HSE is implementing the following:

- Establishing adult and paediatric primary care eye teams in CHOs 6 and 7.
- Establishing an adult primary care eye team and expanding the paediatric primary care eye team in CHO 9.
- Equipped CHOs 6, 7 & 9 to support their new and/or expanded primary care eye teams.
- Completing a proposal to transfer the care of children aged 8+years to the care of local private optometrists; it is proposed that this will roll out to all CHOs in 2021 subject to funding approval.
- Creating a new role of Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist, subject to DPER approval.

- Successfully recruited 1.0 WTE Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist per CHO 6, 7 and 9 to oversee clinical governance in the areas. There is a panel in place to recruit additional Consultant Medical Ophthalmologists to other CHOs and this will be rolled out in line with funding approval

The priority for the HSE is to support the Primary Care Eye Teams in CHOs 6, 7 and 9 to be working to their maximum in 2021 and to then rollout this team model to other CHOs. Staff working within the adult primary care eye teams will manage patients with cataract and other eye conditions to reduce hospital waiting lists. Overtime, some of this work may transition to the local community optometrists, similar to the Sligo model.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



TJ Dunford

Interim Head of Primary Care Operations
Community Operations