

14th December, 2021

Mr. Christopher O'Sullivan, T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 62007/21

"To ask the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to securing radiology services in Clonakilty or Bandon, County Cork to help alleviate the pressure from hospitals in Cork city; and if he will make a statement on the matter."

Dear Deputy O'Sullivan,

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 response.

The provision of HSE funding for GPs to directly refer patients for radiology diagnostics, has enabled new services to commence in 2021, substantially increasing diagnostics capacity. GP referred Ultrasound services have been available for several years along with access to X-ray in Bantry. Since January, GPs can also refer patients for CT scans, MRI scans, Dexa and additional X-rays in non-hospital settings in Cork city. The extra capacity has given GPs an additional tool to improve patient care and reduce their reliance on acute hospitals in Cork. Feedback from GPs to date has been positive.

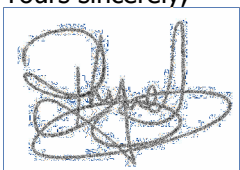
Radiology diagnostics are costly in terms of infrastructure, equipping, specialist staffing and ICT. A critical mass of activity is required to cover the very high costs and sustain the services in the long term. It is therefore not envisaged that radiology services will be located in Bandon or Clonakilty in the foreseeable future.

The HSE/Sláintecare Integrated Programme for Chronic Disease Management IP-CDM will also be implemented in early 2022. This will provide new consultant-led Community Specialist Teams each with 34 new staff who will target COPD and Asthma, Heart failure and Diabetes. The teams will be located in a number of community based hubs. The new model of 'end-to-end' care will shift the over-reliance away from the acute hospitals by providing direct access for GPs for other diagnostics including spirometry and ECHOs, specialist assessment and follow-up. GPs will also be able to request additional NT proBNP blood tests.

It is anticipated the implementation of the programme will reduce the need to attend Emergency departments and other hospital services, prevent admissions and promote early discharge from hospital by providing comprehensive community based services, previously unavailable.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Priscilla Lynch
Head of Service, Primary Care
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare