



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oifig um Cheannasaí Seirbhíse do Chúram Príomhúil  
Cúram Sláinte Phobail FSS an Mheán Iarthair  
Ascaill Bhaile Choimín,  
Páirc Gnó an Ráithín, Ráithín  
Luimneach  
Teil: 061 483722

Office of the Head of Service for Primary Care  
HSE Mid West Community Healthcare  
Ballycummin Ave, Raheen Business Park, Raheen,  
Limerick  
Tel: 061 483722

21<sup>st</sup> September, 2021

**Deputy Willie O’Dea**  
**2 Glenview Gardens**  
**Farranshone**  
**Limerick**

**Re: PQ 43198/21 GP Practice in Templemore, Co. Tipperary.**

Dear Deputy O’Dea,

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question as follows: *“To ask the Minister for Health if he will allow for a six month extension for applicants to run the General Practitioner practice in Templemore, Co. Tipperary which forms a vital service for the town and its hinterlands; and if he will make a statement on the matter”*. I wish to advise you of the following:

It is well recognised that there is currently an undersupply of GP’s in Ireland. We are faced with a recruitment and retention challenge in the speciality. Many of the doctors delivering Primary Care are not on the Specialist Register, our population is growing and the extension of GP visit card eligibility on an incremental basis is Government policy.

Increasing demands on the health system as a direct result of the extension of free GP care, combined with an ageing population, will have a major impact on the future need for GP’s. By 2025, the predicted shortage of GP’s in Ireland will range from 493 to 1,380 depending on increased levels of access to free GP care. There is evidence of a significant undersupply of GP’s in Ireland at present. More than a third of doctors working as GP’s are not on the Medical Council’s Specialist Register of General Practitioners which is a requirement to become a GMS Doctor (*Medical Workforce Planning – Future Demand for General Practitioners 2015-2025*).

Recruiting a single handed GP to take over as the sole GP in a practice is much more challenging than recruiting to a group practice and this is one of the primary reasons the HSE has been unable to recruit a GP for Dr. Hennessy’s practice. Working in a supported group practice environment with multiple GP’s is a more attractive option for GP’s and may be the future in attracting and retaining GP’s in rural GP’s practices.

Adding to this, is the extreme difficulty in sourcing Locum Doctors in Ireland at present. To date, it has not been possible to source a consistent Locum to cover Dr. Hennessy’s Practice, and these difficulties are likely to persist into the future. Locum GP’s are either not available or not willing to work in many rural single handed GP practices.

Since July 2021, there have been eight locum Doctors providing cover in Dr. Hennessy's practice. Having this number of Doctors covering such a short period of time is not consistent in terms of delivering a quality service and providing continuity of care for patients.

There were two recruitment campaigns undertaken in March 2021 and June 2021. Dr. Hennessy's panel was advertised locally, nationally and in the British Medical Journal. In addition to this, the advertisement was shared with all GMS practices across the Mid-West and with the Mid West Training Scheme in an attempt to attract newly qualified GP's. There was one applicant in March 2021, however, this Doctor subsequently withdrew the application prior to interview.

Unfortunately, the HSE has not been successful in recruiting a GP to this single handed GP practice in Templemore.

It is, therefore, planned that the group practice in the town of Templemore, which is currently staffed with two GMS GP's, will take on Dr. Hennessy's GMS panel of patients on an interim basis. This practice has recruited a new GP who commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. This will mean that there will be three Doctors available and the Practice will, therefore, have the additional capacity to provide a safe, accessible and consistent service to the patients in Templemore and the surrounding area.

Additional nursing and administrative staff have also been recruited for this practice.


A letter and information leaflet issued to all Dr. Hennessy's GMS patients in August 2021 advising them of the new arrangements and how to access the new practice.

Whilst the HSE has no responsibility for private patients, private patients have been advised by practice staff of the need to source a new GP. Private patients can contact Dr. Kenny's practice or any other practice of their choice and request to be taken on as a private patient. Should any private patient find it difficult to source a new GP, they can contact the local HSE Primary Care Unit on 061 464068 or 061 464010 who can support them in accessing a GP, insofar as is possible.

The HSE has made every effort to fill the vacancy created by Dr. Hennessy's retirement. Regrettably and despite the efforts outlined above, there has been no interest in this post. Therefore, in order to ensure the continuity of care and in the best interest of patients, an alternative arrangement was put in place with an existing group practice in the town of Templemore. This arrangement will facilitate local access to GP services for existing patients of Dr. Hennessy's practice.

I trust this information addresses the issues raised in your representation.

**Yours sincerely,**

  
**Margaret Costello**  
**Head of Service**  
**Primary Care**