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Deputy Paul Murphy, TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

RE: PQ 9293/22

To ask the Minister for Health the status of plans for improving podiatry services for persons in south-west Dublin and nationally in relation to the HSE model of care for the diabetic foot.

Dear Deputy Murphy,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the above parliamentary question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have consulted with the National Clinical Programme for Diabetes (NCP Diabetes) on your question and have been informed that the following outlines the position.

Limb loss is one of the most devastating complications of diabetes and represents an enormous burden on the individual, their families and on the health and social care system in general. In addition, diabetic foot disease accounts for a significant proportion of health service expenditure. Reducing the number of diabetes related foot ulcers and amputations remains one of NCP Diabetes major aims.

The first Model of Care to be published by NCP Diabetes was the *Model of Care for the Diabetic Foot 2011*, which was recently updated and launched in December 2021. In line with international best evidence it calls for an equitable standardised foot screening process, risk status to be defined and a clinical care and management plan to be recommended for each category. It calls for initial foot screening to occur in general practice, the at-risk foot to be treated in the community setting by the foot protection team and the active foot to receive care in the hospital setting by the multidisciplinary diabetic foot team.

NCP Diabetes completed the updating of the *Model of Care for the Diabetic Foot (2021)*, with a view to clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the various members of the multidisciplinary team (MDT) involved in managing patients with (or at-risk of) foot ulceration. The updated Model of Care emphasises the importance of joined-up working across primary, secondary and tertiary care with clarification of referral pathways between the different sectors.

In line with the vision set out by Sláintecare, the HSE Enhanced Community Care (ECC) programme is a new, targeted reform programme that aims to resource and scale-up community healthcare services nationally, including specialist diabetes teams (comprising podiatrists dietitians and nurses), in line with the *National Framework for the Integrated Prevention and Management of Chronic Disease in Ireland, 2020-2025*.

As part of this initiative, extensive funding has been secured to develop 30 specialist ambulatory care hubs, that will each serve approximately three community healthcare networks [CHNs] (a population of approximately 150,000).

These hubs will deliver specialist services to all eligible patients, thereby supporting General Practices to provide a spectrum of care enabling people with chronic disease to be cared for in the community. To enhance diabetes care in the community, each specialist ambulatory care hub will be resourced with the following diabetes specialist staff:

- Three Clinical Nurse Specialists Diabetes Integrated Care;
- Three Senior Dietitians (Diabetes);
- Three Staff Grade Dietitians (Diabetes Prevention);
- Three Podiatrists (1 Clinical Specialist, 1 Senior Podiatrist and 1 Staff Grade Podiatrists).

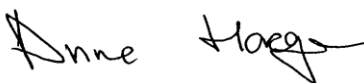
The recruitment of diabetes podiatrists commenced in mid-2021 across the country and continues to date. To support implementation of integrated diabetic foot care, 30 WTE Clinical Specialist Podiatrists, 34 WTE Senior Podiatrists and 29 Staff Grade Podiatrists are being recruited and allocated to staff these Specialist Ambulatory Care Hubs across the 9 Community Healthcare organisations (CHOs). In addition to supporting integration of care and to address acute gaps in service, 3 WTE Clinical Specialists and 3 WTE Senior Podiatrists are being recruited across acute services.

In relation to Dublin South Kildare West Wicklow, 13 podiatry positions have been allocated to work in the specialist diabetes teams.

The HSE Integrated Care Programme for Chronic Disease and the National Clinical Programme for Diabetes (NCP Diabetes) are working with multiple stakeholders (e.g. HS Human Resources, National HSCP Office, professional bodies, HEIs) to prioritise and enable recruitment and retention of podiatrists into these integrated care positions.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Anne Horgan
General Manager