



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta
Clár Cúraim Pobail Feabhsaithe &
Conarthaí Príomhchúraim
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Urlár 2, Páirc Ghnó Bhóthar na Modhfheirme,
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Deputy David Cullinane,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

26th August 2022

PQ 35399/22 - To ask the Minister for Health the total amount allocated by the HSE to provide direct general practitioner-referred access to diagnostics for 2021 and to the end of May 2022, broken down by diagnostic provider and diagnostic categories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - David Cullinane

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above parliamentary questions, which you submitted to the Minister for response. In this regard, I wish to provide a response in respect of GP Direct Access to Community Diagnostics, additional responses may issue in respect of other areas of diagnostic tests and examinations.

In line with the Sláintecare objective of increased access, the Enhanced Community Care Programme (ECC) is to deliver increased levels of health care with service delivery reoriented towards general practice, primary care and community-based services. The focus is on implementing an end-to-end care pathway that will care for people at home and over time prevent referrals and admissions to acute hospitals where it is safe and appropriate to do so, and enable a “home first” approach.

Increasing GP and community access to radiology and chronic disease diagnostics has a number of benefits, including the following:

- Reduce the need to refer patients to the Emergency Department (ED) and Outpatient Department (OPD).
- Enable a greater level of care to be delivered in the community.
- Support the provision of patient-centred care.
- Support early diagnosis, intervention and improved patient outcomes.
- Increase GP and patient access to diagnostics.



Aligning with the goals of Sláintecare to complement work already done in the community including Community Health Networks (CHNs), as well as the Community Specialist Teams for Older Persons and Chronic Disease.

As part of the ECC Programme, in line with the 2020 Winter Plan, the HSE's Corporate Plan and the NSP 2021, the ECC Programme has been working to increase direct access to diagnostic services for GPs. In respect of Community Diagnostics Provision, increased direct access to X-ray, CT, MRI and DEXA is now rolled out for General Practitioners by the HSE.

Between January and December 2021, the service provided access to over 138,000 diagnostic scans for X-ray, CT, MRI and DEXA, providing significant test capacity via the current five private providers or hospitals across the country. This service has continued to operate into 2022, providing over 140,000 additional scans as at the end of July 2022 with an associated expenditure in the region of over €20m to the end of July.

Among the scans provided, approximately 60% of the patients have benefited by receiving MRIs and the remaining 40% receiving X-Ray, CT and DEXA scans.

In addition, targeted initiatives are in place to support access to ultrasound, including waiting list initiatives, since 2018. As at the end of February 2022, the service had delivered over 112,276 scans across the country, with 4,483 of those scans completed in 2022.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Crowley', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Geraldine Crowley,
Assistant National Director,
Enhanced Community Care Programme &
Primary Care Contracts**