



Ceannasaí Seirbhíse, Seirbhísí Cúram
Príomhúil,
Chabháin, Dhún na nGall, Liatroim,
Mhúineacháin, Shiligh,
Campas Naomh Damhnait,
Muineachain

Office of Head of Service Primary Care,
Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan,
Sligo
St. Davnet's Campus,
Monaghan.

www.hse.ie@hselive

t: 047 95615/ 95616

e: HOSPC.CHO1@hse.ie

24/05/2022

Deputy Thomas Pringle
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ ref 23317/22 - To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is currently only one part-time community ophthalmic physician available in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Pringle

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.

I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

There is currently one Community Ophthalmic Physician post filled by two part-time Community Ophthalmic Physicians in Donegal Ophthalmology Services and there are two vacant Community Ophthalmic Physician positions. Recruitment campaigns for Community Ophthalmic Physicians are ongoing in CHO 1, the most recent of which took place two weeks ago. To date, there has been limited success in recruiting additional Community Ophthalmic Physicians to the vacant posts in Donegal.

In recognition of the difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff to these posts, CHO 1 management commenced the process of recruiting a permanent Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist for Donegal which is currently in the final stages of recruitment. It is anticipated that the successful candidate will be in post by September / October 2022 and will fill one of the two vacancies.

In preparation for the appointment of the new Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist, work is ongoing to increase and build capacity in the allied health and nursing workforce to support and optimise the work of the incoming Consultant. A Clinical Nurse Specialist for Ophthalmology was appointed in April 2022 and a recruitment campaign for Optometrists is imminent.

The following contingency measures have also been put in place in the meantime to ensure there is a safe level of service for priority patients.



- The Ophthalmologist service provision is being directed to high priority patients only due to the reduced capacity.
- Ophthalmologists from Sligo University Hospital are providing additional clinics each week in the Eye Clinic in St. Conal's Hospital Campus, Letterkenny to see high priority patients as follows:
 - Monthly Paediatric Clinic
 - Monthly Multidisciplinary Cataract Rapid Access Clinic
 - Weekly Adult Ophthalmology Clinic
 - Weekly Laser Clinics
- A twice-weekly Clinic for Emergency Ophthalmology Care continues to be provided in the Eye Clinic in St Conal's Letterkenny.
- Nursing, Orthoptics and Optometry capacity is optimal and continues to operate as normal.
- Arrangements are being made for patients with Glaucoma who need to be seen urgently to attend service in Barrack Street Primary Care Centre in Sligo or in Letterkenny
- Patients with Diabetes who urgently need to be seen are being assessed and treated at a newly-established twice-monthly Medical Retina and Intravitreal Injection service.
- Fast-tracking of the cataract referrals by the multidisciplinary Ophthalmic team under the leadership of the Sligo Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, which commenced in October 2021, is ongoing.

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

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Mandy Doyle". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mandy Doyle
A/Head of Service Primary Care CHO1

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An Cabhán, Muineachán, Sligeach, Liatroim & Dún na nGall

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