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17<sup>th</sup> May, 2022.

Ms. Holly Cairns T.D.,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 23462/22**

**"To ask the Minister for Health the steps that he is taking to provide chiropody services for public patients in CHO4."**

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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 Community Podiatry Service has provided foot care throughout Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (formerly CHO 4) for many years. This service originally started in 1967 in Cork city and has since expanded to cover all of Cork and Kerry.

The rollout of 14 Community Health Networks across Cork and Kerry with Network Podiatrists allocated to each providing podiatry care to meet the population need and 4 Chronic Disease Hubs for Diabetes care in North Cork City, South Cork City, North Cork and Kerry each having 3 Staff dedicated only to Diabetes foot care.

With the roll out of the Network and Chronic Disease Hub models, investment in additional staffing for Podiatrists working in Primary Care has been forthcoming. Some posts have been successfully filled in Primary Care with a significant uplift in staffing and there is a recruitment campaign currently underway.

Services for podiatry care are needs led and are available to public and private cohorts of patients with no distinction being made between the two groups. There is no charge for these services. Those at greatest need and at the greatest risk of developing foot wounds, serious infection and life changing complications associated with this, are given priority irrespective of financial status. Conditions such as Diabetes, Rheumatology, Neurological diseases, Vascular disease etc. all pre dispose a person to serious complications which can, if left untreated, result in increased hospital admissions for intra venous antibiotics, casting, surgery (amputations) and result in huge ongoing cost to the HSE in terms of bed days and rehabilitation costs.

The Community Podiatry Team helps to reduce the reliance on acute services, keeping people well and at home for as long as possible through on going assessment and treatment and interventions such as orthotics and footwear to maintain foot health and the ability to function independently, free from pain, for as long as possible.

There is currently, a shortage of podiatrists in Southern Ireland but we hope to fill more of the vacancies in the coming weeks through both local and national recruitment campaigns which are well underway for all grades of staff.

New referrals are being accepted in all areas of CKCH: North Lee, South Lee, North Cork, West Cork and Kerry and existing patients are still being prioritised in order of Risk.

We will continue our endeavours to fill all the current vacancies as speedily as possible.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Priscilla Lynch', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

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