

23rd May, 2023

Mr. Denis Naughten, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 21828/23

"To ask the Minister for Health the number of vacant optometry and ophthalmology roles in primary care services in CHO4; and if he will make a statement on the matter."

Dear Deputy Naughten,

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.

Please see table below outlining current vacant Ophthalmology posts;

The following posts are vacant
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 Community Ophthalmic Physician
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 Senior Orthoptist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Orthoptist

In addition we have just received approval for the below new development posts and recruitment is being progressed as a priority;

New Development Posts Approved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 Optometrist, Clinical
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff Nurse General (Community)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Orthoptist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clinical Optometrist

Specialist Ophthalmology posts are proving difficult to fill although the implementation of Integrated eye care will increase the appeal for working in CHO 4 area. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare are engaging/scoping local, national and international recruitment options to fill these posts.

The development of modernised care pathways (MCPs) is a core component of the transformation of the delivery of scheduled care services, with the goal of improving access time to services, improving quality of service and delivering care in the best place for the patient. The HSE's Office of the Chief Clinical Officer approved 37 modernised pathways across 16 specialties in 2022, developed in collaboration with clinical, operational and strategic partners. These pathways will be implemented in a phased manner, targeting, in the first instance specialties with the most significant waiting lists.

Three ophthalmology pathways have been approved to date, each to be delivered utilising community-based Integrated Eye Care Teams. The approved pathways for 2023 are the Cataract Pathway, the Medical Retina Pathway and the Paediatric Eye Pathway, which together will enable the realisation of significant components of the National Model of Care for Ophthalmology. These pathways have been prioritised for immediate commencement.

The National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology recommends an integrated hub-and-spoke model of eye care. The development of multidisciplinary, community-based Integrated Eye Care Teams will enable patients to be seen in their own locality, with all team members working in the same location.

There will be an integrated governance model, with clinical governance provided by acute ophthalmology services. Integrated Eye Care Teams will facilitate the assessment, prioritisation, diagnoses, pre-op/post-op care, and where required, onward referral of patients to acute ophthalmology services.

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', written in a cursive style.

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