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30th April 2024

Cathal Crowe TD
4 Francis Street,
Ennis,
Co. Clare.

RE: PQ 18029/24

To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide details on the reason there is currently no funding plan for a Healthy Food Made Easy Programme in County Clare; the reason no facilitator is in place for the delivery of this programme in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Crowe,

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.

Healthy Food Made Easy is a six week community cooking skills programme. It aims to provide participants with the opportunity to develop basic cooking skills and knowledge around the Healthy Food for Life guidelines. Up to 2021, access to funding of Healthy Food Made Easy (HFME) was accessed through Healthy Ireland Funding administered through Healthy Clare (subcommittee of the Clare LCDC). At that point the Department of Health ceased funding of HFME in this way with the establishment of Sláintecare Healthy Communities. Phase 1 of the Sláintecare Healthy Communities programme commenced in 2021, with a focus on 20 designated areas of deprivation across the country. Community Health Care Network 7 and 8 cover the electoral districts in the only Sláintecare Healthy Community site in the Mid-West.

Given the value of the programme in terms of Health and Wellbeing, Mid West Community Healthcare Health Promotion and Improvement service have continued to support the delivery of HFME across the Mid West. In 2023, our dieticians trained HFME tutors from a wide variety of services across County Clare. This included Post Primary Schools, Youth Services, Brothers of Charity and Family Resource Centres. All of these services went on to train their own staff and were able to absorb the cost of delivering HFME to their own services users. Furthermore, we trained two HFME tutors who are now available to the Healthy Clare HFME panel of tutors. This panel is available should any group wish to run HFME. For example, these tutors are currently funded by Clare Men's Shed as part of the "Sheds for Life Programme", and are delivering HFME to four sites in Clare.

Currently, there are two HFME programmes running by Shannon Family Resource Centre and the Brothers of Charity in Ennis. We remain committed to training of tutors and quality assurance of programme delivery within services across Clare. We continue to explore opportunities to increase the number of HFME programmes through our partner agencies.

I trust this information is of assistance to you and should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Niamh Wallace
Head of Service,
Health and Wellbeing.