



Office of the Head of Primary Care  
Services  
Community Health Organisation  
Midlands Louth Meath

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9<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Deputy Peadar Tóibín T.D.,  
Leinster House  
Kildare St.  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ Ref 18735/24**

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

I acknowledge receipt of your Parliamentary Question **Ref 18735/24** to ask the Minister for Health the reason the Midoc in Birr, County Offaly closed; if there are plans for it to reopen; if there is an assessment of accessibility of primary care in Birr; and if he will make a statement.

An independent review commissioned by the GPs, was undertaken in 2017, which identified concerns in the areas of clinical risk, medical emergencies, and lone worker. These concerns relate specifically to locum doctors on duty working with no clinical support, the ability to manage independently when presented with a medical emergency and the personal safety of the doctor while working alone in Birr.

Service Provision in Birr was also limited, as satellite centres provide a part-time service only with no call-outs/home visits being provided. Outside of the limited operational hours of satellite centres, patients were already attending Tullamore treatment centre (or their nearest full-time GP Out of Hours service in Athlone or Mullingar).

Review of the monthly activity levels indicated that Tullamore would be more than capable of absorbing the patients from Birr (with average weekend attendance for 2018 of 20) The GPs, following consideration of the review made the decision that it was in the best interests that the service be provided in Tullamore as the sole centre for GP Out- of-Hours in Offaly.

Since 2 April 2018, the Midoc Service has been operating one fully functioning Treatment Centre based in Tullamore on the campus of Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore for the entire Offaly population. This is broadly in line with the other Midoc centers across the Midlands. To support the additional attendance from Birr an additional doctor is on duty in Tullamore, during weekends and public holidays, from 12midday to 8pm.



This service provision ensures a more effective management of call outs and home visits to the entire county, including Birr. There is also additional administration support provided by the Offaly Cell to free up doctor's time, resulting in more patient contact, and a more-effective out-of-hours service for all.

It must be emphasised that there has been no reduction in the total GP clinical time allocated to the Midoc service in Offaly nor has there been a reduction in the total monies allocated for the service from the HSE since 2018. The HSE and the GPs are committed to continuing to provide a safe, effective and efficient service for the entire population of Offaly and the Midlands.

**Primary Care Centre Birr, project details and timeframe**

Location: Railway Road, Birr (Behind the Birr Outdoor Education centre, adjacent to the County Arms hotel.

Accessibility: The building will be accessible through a road extension from the roundabout in between the County Arms hotel and the Birr Outdoor Education centre.

Construction start: Enabling works have begun on site by the ESB and are projected to take a number of weeks prior to the full site mobilisation

Expected completion: Construction is expected to be complete during Q4 2025 followed by commissioning and equipping. Expected to be operational Q1 2026.

If you have any further queries please contact me

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Grainne McGill'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Grainne McGill  
A/Head of Primary Care Services  
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation