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3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024

Deputy Pádraig MacLochlainn  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 19467/24**

*“To ask the Minister for Health the reason memory assessment support services for persons with dementia and their families has not been rolled out in County Donegal.”*

Dear Deputy MacLochlainn

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.

Having examined the matter, the following outlines the position.

The Memory Assessment Support Services (MASS) around the country are currently in development and some of the nine are now operational. The MASS is a space where a comprehensive assessment is carried out by the multi-disciplinary team where there is concern about suspected dementia or mild cognitive impairment. The MASS also provides post-diagnostic support (PDS) and follow-up through (i). a specialist dementia post-diagnostic service and (ii). a brain health service; with a comprehensive care and support plan developed for each individual.

The MASS post-diagnostic service will provide personalised assessment, risk reduction intervention, care planning, referral PDS intervention and arrange a point of contact and follow up. Further funding is being sought to fund the development of additional MASS in other areas, including the development of existing memory clinics to become a MASS.

The MASS staffing is made up of the following posts:

1. Consultant
2. Registrar
3. Advanced nurse practitioner
4. Clinical Nurse Specialist
5. Neuro-psychologist
6. Occupational Therapist
7. Neuro-radiologist
8. Speech and Language therapist
9. Dietitian
10. Social Worker
11. Administrative support



The Memory Assessment and Support Service in Co. Donegal is currently under development. The service will become operational when a Consultant is appointed and half of the team are recruited. Currently, none of the vacancies can be progressed because of the HSE recruitment pause, other than the Consultant post which is going to interview in the next few weeks. If there is a successful candidate arising from these interviews, the service can commence in Co. Donegal as per the National Dementia Strategy.

The staff that have already been recruited to the team are working directly with the Geriatricians in Letterkenny University Hospital (LUH) and are delivering pre- and post-diagnosis support to the clients remaining with LUH. The Geriatricians in LUH are providing the governance for the Nurses in the MASS team and the patients remain under the care of the Consultant at LUH.

There are currently no direct referrals to the MASS service from GPs as under the National Dementia Strategy guidance, the team is not operational in the absence of a Consultant and 50% of the team.

The staff that are in post in Donegal MASS include the following:

- Candidate Advanced Nurse practitioner who is working directly with Consultant Psychiatry of Old Age, Geriatrician and Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) in Letterkenny University Hospital (LUH).
- Two Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) who are working with the Geriatricians and ANPs at LUH to provide brain health education, signposting and support for patients with mild cognitive impairment and for those who have a new diagnosis of Dementia. The patients remain under the care of the Consultant Geriatrician or LUH ANPs and this provides the governance for their care. Both CNS also support the Integrated Care Programme for Older People (ICPOP) team, with additional assessments of ICPOP patients who present with memory problems as well as frailty.
- .5 WTE Dietitian who reviews appropriate patients being seen by the CNS for advice. The Dietitian also works .5 with ICPOP.

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 black ink that reads "Melissa Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a decorative flourish at the end.

Melissa Kelly  
A/General Manager,  
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