



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

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2nd April 2024

Deputy Pauline Tully,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 9714/24 - To ask the Minister for Health for an update on the issue of the GP service in Swanlinbar, County Cavan; if the HSE has agreed to meet with the residents to discuss potential solutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter – Pauline Tully

Dear Deputy Tully,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above representation. I want to provide you with an update on the ongoing work to recruit a GP on a permanent basis to the GP practice in Swanlinbar.

You are aware that since 2020 we have advertised this post on 5 occasions, the last time in July last year, and we have been unsuccessful each time. Over that period of time the GP post has been filled by a locum GP employed through the MedDoc locum agency – while this has enabled a GP service be maintained in the town over this period, obviously maintaining it on a locum basis is not a sustainable nor viable option.

The HSE's objective at all times is to provide long term secure GP services for GMS patients in Swanlinbar. In an effort to put a more sustainable plan in place we approached the GP practice in Ballyconnell and asked them if they would consider supporting on a pilot basis the GP service in Swanlinbar. This approach was made to them on the basis of a new initiative which was agreed in the 2023 GP Agreement developed to help us address the challenges of maintaining a GP service in rural areas. Following our approach and in good faith, the practice in Ballyconnell engaged with us to work out how they might be able to support the community in Swanlinbar. The HSE decided to proceed with this proposal which was subsequently communicated locally. However, given how the situation progressed, we have been advised by the practice in Ballyconnell that they do not wish to proceed with this pilot arrangement. We fully respect their decision and we regret if our approach to them caused them any difficulty in their community.

The HSE has now decided to re-advertise the vacant position for a 6th time and we intend to do that in the coming weeks. To ensure clarity for all involved, I have met with the current locum GP who is employed by the MedDoc locum agency to set out the terms under which this GMS contract is being offered in line with National Agreements



including the various subsidies and supports available. I have also confirmed from MedDoc and current locum GP that on the permanent filling of the post the current contract with MedDoc and the locum GP will cease. In the meantime until the permanent filling of the post MedDoc will continue to provide the current locum GP service.

I will keep you updated as we continue our efforts to ensure we can provide a sustainable GP service for the Swanlinbar community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Ruane', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Joseph Ruane
Head of Primary Care Services
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation