



28/06/2024

Deputy Sean Crowe  
Dáil Eireann,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ ref 25649/24**

To ask the Minister for Health if they are aware of the lack of dietitians in the CHO7 area; if they will make allowances under the ongoing recruitment embargo to fill specialist posts such as this, particularly where there are no posts filled; the alternatives available to individuals who require diagnosis and treatment by a dietitian in the CHO7 area; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Crowe,

With reference to your recently received request for information, I have examined the matter and the following outlined the position.

The population health needs for a dietetic service in Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow has continued to grow in demand over the past number of years, with an increasing complexity of need coupled with a lack of dietetic posts in other services resulting in an increased demand on services in Primary Care. The service has had an ongoing challenge in the recruitment of dietitians in the area, given the availability of suitably qualified candidates at present along with the recent recruitment freeze across these grades in the HSE.

Within the Enhanced Community Care (ECC) Chronic Disease programme, of the 26 WTE posts originally approved in the programme, 12 WTE (46%) are filled and in post, 3.5 WTE are vacancies arising from staff leaving, and 10.5 WTE (40%) with approvals no longer valid, as they were new positions approved under the ECC programme but which had not been filled by the date of the recruitment embargo. This means the service is operating at a vacancy level of 54% against what the programme had approved.

At Network and Hub level, the Dietetic community service has 33.4WTE posts approved, with 15.73 WTE in post at present (9.2 WTE for the adult service, 6.53 WTE for the paediatric service), which equates to a 53% vacancy rate.

As a result of the above gaps in staffing, coupled with the increased complexity of service user needs in the community, the provision of service has unfortunately been restricted in many areas, most notably:

Adult primary care dietetic service in the following networks.	Kilnamanagh, Tymon, Millbrook, Firhouse, West Tallaght, Citywest, Naas, Blessington, Kilcullen, Athy, Baltinglass, Newbridge, Kildare, Rathangan, Monasterevin.
No paediatric dietetic service in the following networks.	Crumlin, Walkinstown, Kilnamanagh, Tymon, Millbrook, Firhouse, West Tallaght, Citywest.
No adult home enteral tube service in the following networks.	Crumlin, Walkinstown, Kilnamanagh, Tymon, Millbrook, Firhouse, West Tallaght, Citywest.
Reduced HEN service in the following networks.	Naas, Blessington, Kilcullen, Athy, Baltinglass, Newbridge, Kildare, Rathangan, Monasterevin, Maynooth, Celbridge, Leixlip, Clane, Kilcock.

It is regrettable that a full service cannot be provided to all areas within Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow as outlined above, given that demand continues to outweigh capacity. The service continues to prioritise referrals based on clinical need, staff availability and appropriate clinical governance in order to provide the best service possible within the resources

available. Except where a post falls under an exemption made by the CEO for recruitment, recruitment of dietitians will recommence once the recruitment pause has been lifted in the HSE.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but if you have any queries or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Yours sincerely,**



**Brian Kearney**  
**Head of Primary Care**  
**Dublin South, Kildare & West Wicklow Community Healthcare**