



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta
Clár Cúraim Pobail Feabhsaithe &
Conarthaí Príomhchúraim
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte

Urlár 2, Páirc Ghnó Bhóthar na Modhfheirme,
Bóthar na Modhfheirme, Corcaigh, T12 HT02

Office of the Assistant National Director
Enhanced Community Care Programme &
Primary Care Contracts
Health Service Executive

Floor 2, Model Business Park,
Model Farm Road, Cork, T12 HT02

www.hse.ie

T: 021-4928512

E: primarycare.strategy@hse.ie

Deputy David Cullinane
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

4th April 2024

PQ 10769/24 -To ask the Minister for Health to outline in tabular form the number of GMS panels that are currently vacant without a GP; the location of each panel; the length of time it is vacant; the number of patients on each panel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -David Cullinane

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

I refer to the above PQ received in our office for response. I have set out, overleaf, in a tabular format the information you requested.

Current Vacancies

As you will note from the data provided, there are currently 25 vacant GMS panels, 11 of which are in place greater than 12 months. 14 of the GMS vacancies are located in urban areas and the remaining 11 are in rural areas. There are approximately 3,400 GPs working in Primary Care in Ireland who hold a GMS contract or at least one public contract with the HSE, these GPs working circa. 1,400 practices across the country. These vacant panels therefore represent less than 1% of GMS panels and of the total GMS vacancies. The HSE is committed to continuing to engage with the relevant GP stakeholders in ensuring the sustainability of these GP practices. These practices are currently covered with Locum GPs or Doctor in Charge Arrangements while permanent solutions are being pursued.

GP Agreement 2023 – Rural Practices and Areas of Urban Deprivation

A number of measures are included in the GP Agreement 2023, in relation to maintaining GMS GP services in isolated rural and urban disadvantaged communities, including pilot initiatives whereby qualifying GMS practices, where a vacancy has arisen due to retirement /resignation/death of the outgoing single-handed GP, may form an affiliation with a larger practice involving two or more GMS GPs within the nearest population centre.

In addition, to providing financial supports and initiatives to address the current challenges in filling GMS vacancies in rural and urban disadvantaged areas in particular, the 2023 GP Agreement also provides for increased supports to GPs to maintain and increase capacity in general practices. This includes enhanced Practice Support Subsidies and introduction of a new form of Practice Grant towards the cost of employing additional practice staff and/or increase in hours of existing practice staff, together with the introduction of a new role of GP Practice Assistant. The 2023 Agreement also makes provision for additional supports for GMS GP practices in rural communities in sourcing locum cover, for periods of approved leave.

Expansion of GP Training

The HSE is working closely with the Irish College of General Practitioners on a range of measures to expand the GP Workforce and in developing a sustainable model of General Practice for the future in line with Sláintecare. GP Training Places have increased from an intake of 259 in 2022 to 286 in 2023 and there will be an intake of 350 in 2024.

The total number of trainees undertaking the four-year programme will increase from the current 1,044 to 1,300 in 2026 – a 25% increase. Funding has been provided in the 2024 budget to enable the HSE and the ICGP to implement this initiative at pace.

International Medical Graduates (IMG) Programme

The International Medical Graduates (IMG) Programme, is an initiative supported by the ICGP, HSE and the IMO aimed at expanding GP workforce in rural and urban disadvantaged areas. A total of 112 candidates were successfully recruited to the scheme in 2023, 87 of which have commenced in general practice and the remaining awaiting placement. The plan is for another 250 doctors by the end of 2024. This has a very immediate impact on GP shortages. The new additional posts will work in General Practice for a 2 year period, following which they can take up an Irish GMS contract. The initiative is targeted at rural areas, areas of urban deprivation and those difficult to fill posts in various geographical locations across the country. The initiative in 2023 has helped ease the pressures on GP Practices in the southwest, southeast, midlands and western seaboard.

General Practice Strategic Review

The Minister for Health has established a Strategic Review of General Practice. The Review is being led by the Department of Health, with support from the HSE and input from key stakeholders, including the IMO and ICGP. The Review is examining the issues affecting general practice including GP training, GP capacity, Out of Hours services reform, the eHealth Agenda, and the financial support model for general practice.

The Review will then identify the arrangements necessary to improve the current system of GP care as part of a primary care-focused health service and in line with the Sláintecare vision on access.

Following its conclusion, a report will be presented to the Minister for Health giving an assessment of the challenges affecting general practice and setting out the actions needed to provide for a more sustainable GP service. Meetings of the Joint Department of Health/HSE Steering Group are ongoing and engagement with relevant stakeholders is currently underway.

I trust this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



**Geraldine Crowley,
Assistant National Director,
Enhanced Community Care Programme &
Primary Care Contracts**



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GMS Vacancies 1st April 2024

Community Healthcare Organisation	Vacancies on GMS Scheme as at 1 st April 2024 (with panel size)	State whether Urban or Rural . If rural is there an RPSF associated with it? If Urban specify Large or Small (if urban population size to be categorised based on population as large town 1,500 – 5,000 or small town less than 1,500)	Duration of Vacancy as at 1 st April 2024
CHO – Area 1	<p>Donegal – 0</p> <p>Sligo/Leitrim – 0</p> <p>Monaghan – 0</p> <p>Cavan – 2 Swanlinbar (559)</p> <p>117 College Street, Cavan town (604)</p>	<p>Rural</p> <p>Urban</p>	<p>3 years & 5 months</p> <p>3 months</p>
CHO West	<p>Galway – 3 Inis Oirr / Inis Meain, Aran Islands (220)</p> <p>Oughterard (404)</p> <p>Inis Mor, Aran Islands (365)</p> <p>Mayo –2 Achill Island (497)</p> <p>Charlestown (888)</p>	<p>Rural – RPSF</p> <p>Rural-RPSF</p> <p>Rural-RPSF</p> <p>Rural-RPSF</p> <p>Rural</p>	<p>16 years & 4 months</p> <p>4 years & 10 months</p> <p>10 months & 1 day</p> <p>3 years & 9 months</p> <p>2 years, 2 months & 2 weeks</p>



	Roscommon – 1 Strokestown (670)	Rural - RPSF	7 months
CHO Midwest	North Tipperary/East Limerick – 1 Thurles (904)	Rural	2 years, 9 months & 1 day
	Clare – 1 Kilrush (572)	Rural	2 years & 2 months
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare	Kerry - 1 Cahivciveen (942)	Urban	10 months
CHO - Area 5	South Tipperary – 1 Cahir (682)	Urban	5 years, 6 months & 1 week
	Carlow Kilkenny – 1 Kilkenny City & Ballyragget (574)	Urban	6 years, 11 months & 3 weeks
	Waterford – 1 Lismore (839)	Rural-RPSF attached	6 months & 1 week
CHO – Area 6	Wicklow - 0	N/A	N/A
	Dun Laoghaire- 0		
	Dublin South – 0		
CHO – Area 7	Kildare West Wicklow, Dublin West, Dublin South City, Dublin South West -4		
	Ballyowen Medical, Lucan (1000)	Urban - Large	6 months
	Ballyowen Medical, Lucan (360)	Urban – Large	1 year
	Ballyowen Medical, Lucan (700)	Urban – Large	1 year
	Alderwood, Tallaght (820)	Urban – Large	2 months
CHO Midlands/Louth/Meath Community Health Organisation	Louth/ Meath - 2 Dundalk (797)	Urban – Large	1 year & 2 months



	Dundalk (703)	Urban – Large	1 year & 1 month
	Longford/ Westmeath – 0		
	Laois/Offaly – 1 Edenderry (800)	Rural	3 months
CHO Dublin North City and County	Dublin North - 3 Alfa Medics, Northside Shopping Centre (885)	Urban - Large	8 months & 2 weeks
	Phibsborough (510)	Urban – Large	2 months
	Tyrrelstown (1122)	Urban – Large	1 month & 3 weeks
	Dublin North West – 0		
	Dublin North Central-0		