



Ceannasaí na Seirbhísí Bunchúraim  
Cúram Sláinte Phobail, Iarthar, Ceanncheathrú N. Muire,  
Caisleán an Bharraigh, Co. Mhaigh Eo, F23 HP58.  
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**Head of Primary Care Services**  
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September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Mr. Michael Ring, T.D.,  
Constituency Office,  
Quay Street,  
Westport,  
Co. Mayo,  
F82 FT96.

**RE:PQ 34158**

**"To ask the Minister for Health the steps taken to increase the number of practicing GPs in an area (details supplied); if he acknowledge the concern of the residents of this area that there are not enough GPs to cover the numbers in this community, in view of the aging population and the distance from the nearest hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter"**

Dear Deputy Ring

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. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position in Primary Care.

Up to June 2020 there were three GMS GPs providing services to Achill, Clare Island and Inishbiggle Island. At that time one of the GPs resigned from her duties in Achill to provide services to Clare Island and Inishbiggle Island only. This left two GMS GPs providing services in Achill and one to the residents of Clare Island and Inishbiggle Island. Any other GPs who may have worked in Achill at that time were employed in private capacities by the Achill GPs and did not hold GMS Contracts.

One of the GMS GPs providing services in Achill retired in December 2020 but continues to work on a part time basis in a private capacity with the remaining GMS GP. The GMS GP is also a Trainer on the Western GP Training Scheme and GP Trainees have been assigned to her for the past twelve months.

Efforts to fill the vacant GMS position since 2020 have been unsuccessful despite the position being advertised on fifteen occasions. In order to maintain services to the people of Achill, a doctor has been employed through a Locum Agency since January 2021.

Community Healthcare West has been working closely with the Irish College of General Practitioners with a view to increasing the number of GP working in Achill but unfortunately efforts to recruit a GP through the Fellowship Programme and the Non-EU GP Scheme, operated by the college, have been unsuccessful to date.

The main difficulties associated with attracting doctors to work in Achill are location, size of the available GMS panel and the onerous on-call commitment. The on-call is currently shared on a 1:2 rota between the GMS GP and the Agency GP working in Achill, with 25 weekends covered by Westdoc, the GP Out-of-Hours service in Community Healthcare West. Efforts will continue to fill the vacant GMS position there, which has proved to be very challenging to date, and also to increase the Westdoc coverage, which will require additional resources from national HSE.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely



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**Mary Warde**  
**Head of Primary Care Services**  
**Galway, Mayo & Roscommon**