

Private & Confidential

24th February 2025

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae
Dáil Éireann, Leinster House,
Kildare St, Dublin 2

Dear Deputy Healy-Rae

Ref PQ 5598/25:

To ask the Minister for Health when services will resume in University Hospital Kerry (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Danny Healy-Rae

When will eye services resume in UHK, in December 2023 a problem arose regarding the inadequacy of the medical indemnity under which the eye services were being provided, this was a relatively minor contractual problem and should have been easily and quickly rectified, however it is still not rectified over a year later.

The above referred Parliamentary Question on various matters at University Hospital Kerry, has been submitted to this office, for response :

Response provided by University Hospital Kerry:

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare, South, South West Hospital Group and South Infirmary Victoria Hospital continue to work collaboratively to develop a Regional Eye Care Service based in the new Primary Community Care Centre located in Ballincollig Cork. This new service will provide a designated specialised infrastructure where all community procedures related to Ophthalmology will be performed and incorporate Multidisciplinary Team Working between multiple grades of Ophthalmology staff to deliver the best outcomes for both children and adults. Other Ophthalmology Clinics located in North Cork, West Cork and Kerry will also continue to function in order to support the wide geographic spread across Cork and Kerry. This model of care is in line with recommendations of the Primary Care Eye Services Review Group report and the Model of Eye Care under the National Clinical Programme (NCP) for Ophthalmology.

Three ophthalmology pathways have been approved to date, each to be delivered utilising community-based Integrated Eye Care Teams. The approved pathways are the Cataract Pathway, the Medical Retina Pathway and the Paediatric Eye Pathway, which together will enable the realisation of significant components of the National Model of Care for Ophthalmology. Initial allocation of funding towards development of the initial phases of the services for Cork and Kerry is in place. A steering group has been convened between CKCH, SSWHG and SIVUH to commence the operationalisation of an integrated eye care service.

A new Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist commenced in the region at the end of 2024, bringing essential clinical leadership to Multidisciplinary Teams across Cork and Kerry. The work of the Steering Committee will continue to strengthen care pathways between Acute Hospitals and Community Services. Community Ophthalmic Services in Kerry remain operational, supported by a Community Ophthalmic Physician, nursing, and administrative teams.

We recognise the challenges associated with waiting times, particularly for specific ophthalmic conditions, and the HSE Southwest is actively implementing targeted measures to address them. As part of the Modernised Care Pathways, significant progress has already been made in reducing paediatric waiting lists in the Cork region, and we are committed to applying these insights in the Kerry region as resources permit.

With regards to addressing the needs of patients who urgently require ophthalmological care in Kerry, these patients are advised to contact their GP or Southdoc Out of Hours GP service in the first instance. Where required, these patients are then advised by their GP/Southdoc to attend the Eye Casualty Service in SIVUH. In the event of a patient presenting directly to Emergency Department in UHK, an initial assessment is undertaken and where necessary, an onward referral to the Eye Casualty Service in SIVUH.

I trust this response is to your satisfaction; should you have any further queries however, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Fitzgerald
General Manager
University Hospital Kerry