



20 June, 2025

Deputy Erin McGreehan, TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

RE: PQ 33250/25

To ask the Minister for Health if her Department has plans to implement a fully funded, multi-disciplinary approach to inflammatory bowel disease care, to ensure that patients have access to the full range of healthcare professionals required to manage their condition; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy McGreehan,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the above parliamentary question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have consulted with the National Clinical Programme for Gastroenterology and Hepatology (NCP G&H) on your question and have been informed that the following outlines the position.

Inflammatory Bowel Diseases [IBD], including both Ulcerative Colitis and Crohns Disease, are chronic, inflammatory digestive diseases affecting about 1% of the Irish population.

The National Clinical Programme for Gastroenterology and Hepatology (NCP G&H) acknowledges the importance of multidisciplinary team (MDT) care for IBD patients in providing best outcomes.

There are currently 28 hospitals offering an IBD service to 50,000 patients. Ten of these services are in level 4 hospitals, with the remaining 18 in level 3 hospitals.

With respect to the range of healthcare professionals currently in place nationally, there are:

- 85 consultant gastroenterologists nationally, 52 in level 4 and 33 across the remaining 18 hospitals
- 30 combined total of IBD clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) and clinical nurse managers (CNM2s)
- 6 IBD advanced nurse practitioners (ANPs)
- 2 WTE psychologists
- 3.9 Dietitians for Gastroenterology specialty (i.e., not IBD specific).

The IBD working group of NCP G&H is working to improve access to MDT care. A key output from the IBD Working Group has been the development of an IBD Modernised Care Pathway (MCP). The aim of this pathway is to increase accessibility to IBD services nationally, in line with Sláintecare objectives.

The IBD MCP involves care provision by specialist IBD Advanced Nurse Practitioners and serves patients (adults and children) with a diagnosis of IBD. It became operational in 2024 and currently there are 11 active sites in Ireland. It is envisaged, in time, that IBD Nurses would also support the expansion of IBD transition services from paediatric to adult services and maternity services.

National Clinical Programme for Gastroenterology and Hepatology (NCP G&H) continues to advocate for more consultants. Furthermore, training in intestinal ultrasound (IUS) is provided to provide quicker access to diagnostics. In Ireland, we now have 8 Consultant Gastroenterologists who have completed all parts of the international certification (IBUS) in IUS who can deliver the service to patients and training to others. The major IBD centres have IUS machines and other centres are in the process of acquiring equipment.



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

Yours sincerely,

Anne Horgan
General Manager