



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: Geraldine.crowley@hse.ie

Deputy Marie Sherlock
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

1st May 2025

PQ : 12242/25 To ask the Minister for Health how long the HSE is actively involved in the recruitment process to find a replacement GP following a vacancy in a practise with a GMS contract, if this involvement always results in a new GP to fill the vacancy; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

I refer to your parliamentary question, which was passed to the HSE for response.

As at the 1st of March 2025 there are approximately 3,174 GPs with a public contract (2,553 GMS & 621 others) and c.800 GPs including those who work privately, GPs in training and International Medical Graduate (IMG) participants. As of the start of the February 2025, there were 24 GMS vacancies across the country, less than 1 percent of the total number of GMS panels. In each case a locum or other appropriate arrangement has been put in place to maintain services to the communities.

In situations where the HSE is notified that a GMS Contract holder is retiring or resigning from their contract, the HSE commences the process of selecting a GP to take on the GMS contract. Notification of the vacant contract goes out to public advert and would be advertised on the HSE Website, Medical Websites, local papers etc. Interested GPs complete the vacancy application forms, all applications are then reviewed by the HSE and interviews are then scheduled.

The timeline for appointment of a replacement GP under a GMS vacancy may vary from area to area depending on a number of factors such as the nature of the vacancy, location, interest, panel size being advertised and the applicant's suitability and qualifications.

While the contracting process is underway the HSE make the necessary arrangements to ensure that there is continuity of care for the patients in the community. These arrangements continue in the norm for the duration of the campaign until a new GMS GP commences in a permanent capacity.

The HSE is actively working to increase the number of GPs through various initiatives detailed below.

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 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 Graduate (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. As of Q3 2024, 129 candidates have started with the IMG Programme with over 100 of these currently working in General Practice. Recruitment is ongoing in 2025. This has a very immediate impact on GP shortages. The new additional posts 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. IMG candidates are in place across all the Health Regions, and the initiative has helped ease the pressures on GP Practices in areas such as 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**