



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta
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Deputy Marie Sherlock
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

01st May, 2025

PQ : 12243/25 To ask the Minister for Health the number of GPs replaced following vacancies in a practice with a GMS contract, from 2018 to 2024; 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.

Please see below list of vacancies for the year 2018 to 2024 as requested. Please note that as vacancies are filled more vacancies arise so the vacancies below change on a month to month basis. These vacant panels represent less than 1% of GMS panels overall. These vacant panels are covered with Locum GPs or Doctor in Charge Arrangements while permanent solutions are being pursued.

Year	No of GMS vacancies
December 2018	22
December 2019	25
December 2020	18
December 2021	26
December 2022	29
December 2023	23
December 2024	21

GMS vacancies are advertised in advance of known retirements/resignation and every effort is made to fill GMS vacancies. Under the terms of the GMS contract, GPs are required to provide three months' notice to the HSE, of their intention to retire/resign from the GMS Scheme. All GMS vacancies are advertised by open competition and if unsuccessful, vacancies are re-advertised. Locum GP cover is maintained in the interim in the vast majority of cases while in a small number of cases, the retiring GP is requested to remain in practice, on a temporary basis, until the vacancy is filled or until an alternative option is finalised.

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**