

## **Contract for the Provision of GP Care Free at Point of Access for Children Under 6 years**

### **1. Background and Context**

As a first step in the delivery of the Government's health policy, to provide universal GP care, a contract for the provision of GP care for Children under 6 years has now been finalised. The contract encompasses the strengths of the existing General Medical Services (GMS) contract while also providing enhanced services to children under 6. This marks the first phase in the introduction of Universal GP Care and also involves a significant re-investment in and strengthening of General Practice.

### **2. Overall Aims and Guiding Principles of the Under 6 Contract**

- Alignment with national policy intent as set out in Future Health.
- Acknowledgement that GPs play an important role in health service delivery and that the contractual arrangements with GPs are key elements of the health service reform programme.
- The need to ensure that general practice and primary care generally fulfils its potential as the setting in which the majority of the population's day-to-day healthcare needs are met.
- The provision of effective, safe and high quality health services in which the safety and welfare of children is paramount.
- The need to reorient the focus of primary care toward active health promotion, early intervention, prevention and appropriate management of chronic conditions, in addition to diagnosis and treatment in line with "Healthy Ireland, a Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025".

### **3. Key Features of Under 6 Contract**

- Maintains "Choice of Doctor" policy.
- In addition to diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions the scope of services includes the following enhanced service offerings.
  - Periodic Wellness Assessments, this includes the provision of periodic wellness checks for children once at age two and once at age five, which are focused on health and wellbeing and disease prevention. *(for details see Appendix 1 of Contract); and*
  - A Cycle of Care for the management of Asthma. Under the cycle of Care GPs will be required to maintain a register of Child Patients aged under 6 years with a diagnosis of Asthma and provide services to such Child Patients in accordance with the agreed Cycle of Care. *(for details see Appendix 2 of Contract)*
- Provides for appropriate arrangements for 24/7 out-of-hours services to the Child Patients on their panel.
- Facilitates the introduction of ICT initiatives in Primary Care settings.
- Includes a more comprehensive, practical and fair complaints, disputes resolution and disciplinary set of processes & procedures.

### **4. GP Registration Process**

GPs who wish to provide GP Care to Children under 6 will be required to enter into a Contract with the HSE. Details on the process for entering into this Contract with the HSE will be conveyed to GPs in a separate letter in the coming days.

The HSE's GP information line will be available from Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2015 Monday to Friday between the hours of 9.00- 17.00 to respond to any queries that GPs may have in respect of this contract and will be contactable at **1890 252 920**.

## **5. Patient Registration Process**

The registration process for Child Patients will commence in early June 2015 so that free GP care can commence on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015. Details on the process for registering Child Patients, including public information points, will be published in the coming weeks.

If a child already has a Medical Card or a GP Visit Card, there will be no need to register for Free GP Care provided the Child's current GP has entered into this Contract with the HSE.

It is also worth noting that a process is underway to review the current GMS contracts and all other publicly funded health sector contracts involving GPs. This work has commenced and to-date some measures have been agreed between the parties, including:

- The introduction of Free GP Care at the point of access to all persons aged 70 years and over;
- The introduction of a Cycle of Care in General Practice for patients with Type 2 Diabetes;
- The optional extension of the GP's retirement age under his/her public contracts from 70 years up to a maximum of 72 years; and
- The introduction of flexible arrangements where two GPs can share a contract.