



Date: 20th December, 2023

Circular Number: NCO-51-2023

Temporary Supports for General Practice – UEC

Dear Doctor,

As I am sure you will be aware our health services across General Practice, community and acute hospitals are currently experiencing significant pressures associated with increase in levels of RSV, influenza, Covid-19 and other respiratory viruses as well as potential of increased bacterial infections. It is clear that during this winter, as in previous years, we will continue to require a strong coordinated and integrated approach across these services if we are to successfully respond to current and anticipated levels of activity and demand.

I wish to advise that in the above context, the HSE with the support of the Department of Health and following agreement with the Irish Medical Organisation have agreed to introduce a number of General Practice service oriented support measures for both day-time general practice and out-of-hours services through GP Co-ops.

The Support measures are outlined hereunder.

1. Day Time General Practice

General Practice will continue to experience significant and additional patient demand for the coming weeks in this context the following day time and out of hours arrangements will be in place, over a four week period, with effect from 27th December, 2023 to 27th January, 2024 inclusive.

The STC Rate of €41.63 will be available to GPs for GMS patients from 8am to 9am (inclusive) and from 5pm – 7pm (inclusive) Monday to Friday and from 9am -1pm (inclusive) on Saturday. It is recognised that all GP sessions are a mix of GMS and private patients and that practice should continue for the extended/additional sessions with private patients paying as normal and in line with practice policy.

It is recognised that not all practices will be in a position to undertake the additional hours and it is further acknowledged that there is a requirement to protect GP time in terms of their commitment to Out of Hours services, which will continue to operate during these hours.

All claims for reimbursement are to be submitted in the normal way for STCs through PCRS online portal or manual in line with existing practice protocols and should be submitted no later than three to five working days of the consultation. In line with existing practices all forms must be signed by the individual patient noting the date and time of consultation.



These measures are exceptional in nature, time bound and do not erode, substitute for or replace existing legislative, circular or contractual terms pertaining to the General Medical Services Contract with GPs.

2. Out of Hours

The HSE will provide funding to the current grant funded Co-ops to enable them roster additional doctors in out of Hours Treatment Centres between the hours of 6pm and 10pm. This additional funding will enable more patients to receive in person consultations by Co-ops with the objective of reducing the number of referrals to ED as well as the number of patients presenting directly to EDs without having been first seen by the relevant GP Out of Hours service. The additional rostered doctors can be locums engaged by the Co-ops or existing GP Co-Op members. This exceptional measure will commence on 27th December, 2023 and will operate to 28th January, 2024 (inclusive).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all GPs and practice team for their continued support and hard work during 2023 in meeting the challenges that face our healthcare system.

Finally, I would like to wish you and your practice team a Happy Christmas and all the very best for 2024.

Yours sincerely

Pat Healy
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& Professional Development