

8th April 2024

Deputy Sorca Clarke TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

RE: PQ 44221/23 - To ask the Minister for Health the current situation with staffing in relation to the paediatric diabetes service in Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar; the number of children currently attending; and the number of children awaiting an appointment

PQ 45125/23 - To ask the Minister for Health the number of posts currently filled on a permanent basis by paediatric-qualified staff

PQ 47872/23 - To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients currently attending the paediatric diabetes service in the Regional Hospital Mullingar

PQ 47890/23 - To ask the Minister for Health the current staffing of the paediatric diabetes service in the Regional Hospital Mullingar; the current vacancies within that service; and how long each post has been vacant for

PQ 15089/24 - To ask the Minister for Health what plans he has in place to address the staffing crisis impacting the paediatric diabetes service in Regional Hospital, Mullingar, thereby ensuring the children of the Midlands are afforded the option to receive the best care close to home and not put under unnecessary stress

PQ 15088/24 - To ask the Minister for Health if he will take the necessary measures to ensure that the paediatric diabetes service in the Regional Hospital Mullingar will be kept open for those 145 children who avail of this service; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy Clarke

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

I can confirm there is a 145 children attending the service. Due to the urgent/emergency nature of the Paediatric Diabetic condition, there is no waiting list, as the children are seen as a priority. This is done to avoid a worsening of the condition and to avoid hospital admission if possible. 1 x CNM11 is currently on temporary Maternity Leave and the 2nd temporary vacancy for necessary staff leave.

Hospital management fully recognises the challenges faced by parents of children diagnosed with diabetes and the importance of the Diabetes Service for the patients and their families. We understand the importance of the staff supporting this service on a daily basis. The team in the hospital are all working very hard to ensure continuity of these services.

There are significant challenges that we are facing given the national and international scarcity of specialist trained paediatric nursing staff.

Plans were discussed at a meeting of the Paediatric Diabetes MDT managers on the 21st March 2024 and nurse management provided a commitment to progress solutions to the staffing needs of this service. Every effort was and is being made to ensure stability of the Paediatric Diabetes Service.

The Hospital team met again late last week to work through the challenges facing the service and to work on plans to support it.

As agreed by Hospital Management contingency plans continue in place whereby the outpatient clinics are continuing and in case of emergency, patients can make contact with the Paediatric Registrar on-call.

The following actions were agreed:

- The Paediatric Day Ward will open as planned which will transfer activity away from the inpatient ward to a more appropriate environment.
 - This transfer of activity will facilitate the previously identified Staff Nurse to be redeployed from the Inpatient Ward to the Paediatric Diabetes Unit to support the team and continue her training in Paediatric Diabetes. This is currently being planned with key staff.
- Dublin Midlands Hospital Group (DMHG) have launched another round of recruitment campaigns for Paediatric Nurses.
- RHM and DMHG have identified other potential recruitment streams in co-operation with the other midland hospitals.
- RHM have approval to fill a vacant Staff Nurse post with the candidate on the recruitment panel.
- Business Cases were agreed and will be submitted for the future development of the Paediatric Diabetes Unit to ensure a resilient service.

The provision of high quality paediatric diabetic services is a priority of the Regional Hospital Mullingar. In recent years there has been increasing demand on Paediatric Diabetes Services linked to a nationally recognised increased prevalence of childhood diabetes.

The hospital have maintained emergency services for 12,437 Paediatric Emergency Department attendances in 2023 together with providing 5,277 Out Patient attendances and 1,357 Inpatient Admissions. This has been achieved by utilising cross cover, Adaptation Programmes to upskill international recruits and with agency supplementation.

Overview of Service

The Paediatric Department at Regional Hospital Mullingar provides services for the children living in the Midlands including 24/7 ED, a dedicated 25 bed inpatient ward and specialist outpatient services including, amongst others, a Paediatric Diabetes Service.

Consultant paediatrician numbers have been increased in recent times with 2 permanent posts filled in the last year.

The paediatric diabetes team consisting of an Advanced Nurse Practitioner, a Clinical Nurse Manager, a Clinical Psychologist, Dietician (half time) and clerical support were fully staffed in recent years. This provided an excellent service for children in the Midlands with Diabetes which unfortunately is now challenged by reduced staffing levels. There are a number of opportunities for Paediatric Nurses to join the team in MRHM and these posts are currently advertised.



Kay Slevin
Hospital Manager