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30th April, 2024.

Ms. Holly Cairns, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ 18599/24

"To ask the Minister for Health the number of GPs currently working in Cork; and the number of GPs who were working in Cork in April 2021, April 2022 and April 2023, in tabular form."

Dear Deputy Cairns,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

There were 328 GMS panels in Cork in 2021, 331 in 2022 and 322 in 2023. While this is a reduction in the number of contracts (approximately less than 2%), I strongly caution against simply comparing the number of panels in place now and the number in the past. In some cases, a panel or lists with a small number of patients may have been merged with another panel so that it is attractive for prospective candidates. This does not mean there has been a reduction in the cover offered to these patients. In other cases, the GP giving up the contract has been part of a GP partnership which means that their partner has the right to take up the GMS panel. Again, this could mean that the panels are merged but the cover offered is not reduced.

Of the 322 GMS panels in Cork, there are no vacant panels presently.

Despite the well-documented challenges in GP recruitment, at no time has anyone or any area been left without GP cover for a GMS list. Any vacancy is dealt with quickly and appropriately, usually by advertising the contract and filling the position.

I am very aware of the importance of GP services to all communities including rural areas, and we do not underestimate the challenges in recruiting GPs to take up GMS panels in some rural areas. My team and I are making strenuous efforts to advertise and raise the profile of any vacancies, so that we attract a field of qualified candidates. In any case, where there has been a temporary vacancy while we recruit GP cover, we have ensured that interim arrangements are in place, and these remain in place until we recruit a GP to take on the vacant panel.

I wish to reassure you that we are constantly reviewing our efforts to ensure that we are availing of any opportunity to highlight the vacant panel, and the delivery of a safe, quality and accessible GP service under the GMS contract remains a key priority.



Table hereunder breaks down the GMS panel for the region for the periods requested:

LHO	No. of GMS GPs 2021	No. of GMS GPs 2022	No. of GMS GPs 2023
South Lee	132	136	133
North Lee	102	100	98
West Cork	38	41	40
North Cork	56	54	51
TOTAL	328	331	322

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Priscilla Lynch
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