

14<sup>th</sup> May, 2024

Deputy Louise O'Reilly, TD  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**RE: PQ 19313/24**

**To ask the Minister for Health when the last national immunology strategy was delivered; if the recommendations of the strategy were achieved; and when a new strategy will be produced**

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the above parliamentary question(s), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have consulted with the Laboratory Reform Programme on your question and have been informed that the following outlines the position.

**When was the last national immunology strategy delivered?**

The most recent document relating specifically to the development of immunology services is the *"Report of the Committee on Immunology Services" Adopted by Comhairle na nOspidéal at its meeting on 24th November, 2000<sup>1</sup>.*

**Were the recommendations of the strategy achieved?**

Section 6 of the *Report of the Committee on Immunology Services* comprises a summary of recommendations, with a total count of 11 recommendations.

- Ten (10) of the eleven (11) recommendations are fully or partially implemented.
- One (1) recommendation (Recommendation 5) has not been implemented.

The following table provides a high-level summary of status and related detail with respect to all recommendations.

No	Recommendation	Status	Detail
1	Four supra-regional immunology centres in Ireland. Two centres are recommended for Leinster/Ulster - one centre based in North Dublin and one based in South Dublin to also serve adjacent health boards. The committee also recommends the development of supra regional immunology centres for Munster and Connacht/Donegal to be based in Cork and Galway respectively.	Partially implemented	Immunology services are configured as outlined in the report (delivered from North Dublin, South Dublin and Galway), with the exception that the service in Cork has not been developed.
2	The North Dublin centre with the major laboratory based at Beaumont Hospital will provide services to the other hospitals in the Northern Area Health Board and the North Eastern Health Board. Two posts are recommended for the centre based at Beaumont – each with sessional commitments to the Mater Hospital. While it is envisaged that the North Dublin immunology centre will undertake a broad spectrum of immunology duties, clinical and	Implemented.	The North Dublin centre based at Beaumont has 2 posts Consultant posts ((1.5 whole time equivalent [WTE] posts at present) and a focus on HLA and Tissue Typing;

	laboratory, it is envisaged that the centre will also focus on HLA and Tissue Typing laboratory services based at Beaumont Hospital.		There are sessional commitments to the Mater Hospital.
3	The South Dublin supra-regional immunology centre with the major laboratory based at St. James's Hospital and staffed by three consultants, will provide services to other hospitals in the East Coast and South Western areas of the ERHA and also to the Midland Health Board and South Eastern Health Board. Each post at St. James's Hospital will have a sessional commitment to one of the major teaching hospitals in the region, i.e. St. Vincent's and Tallaght. The South Dublin immunology centre will undertake a broad spectrum of immunology duties, clinical and laboratory. It is envisaged that it will also focus on white cell, antibody studies and other immunology services.	Partially implemented	There are two posts based in St James hospital. These post do not have sessional commitments to other hospitals
4	One of the posts of consultant immunologist based at the South Dublin supra-regional immunology centre should have a special interest in paediatric immunology and have a substantial clinical commitment at the Children's hospital in Crumlin and a link to the Children's Unit in Tallaght.	Partially implemented	Children's Health Ireland has appointed consultant immunologists (infectious disease subspecialty) with an interest in paediatric immunology; However no Consultant Immunologist (Clinical and Laboratory) has been appointed.
5	The development of a supra-regional immunology centre for Munster staffed by two consultants and based at Cork University Hospital will provide services to the Southern Health Board and the Mid Western Health Board areas.	Not implemented	There is no supra-regional service for Munster. The HSE has approved two Consultant Immunologist posts for Cork University Hospital but these posts have not been filled.
6	The centre for Connacht and Donegal should be staffed initially with one consultant immunologist and based at University College Hospital Galway providing services to the Western Health Board and the North Western Health Board areas. A second post should be considered in due course. The North Western Health Board should consider developing links with the Belfast immunology centre for Donegal patients given that Belfast is less distant than Galway or Dublin.	Implemented	Hospitals of the Western Health Board and North Western Health Board were merged into the Saolta Group. There are two Consultant posts based in Galway.
7	The IBTS should now review its consultant immunologist requirements and consider a formal link with the South Dublin supra regional centre which is also on the St. James's Hospital campus.	Effectively implemented in that the purpose achieved	The IBTS has devised a medical model of care for the functions of the organisation.  The Histogenetics and Immunogenetics Laboratory is co-directed by a Principal Clinical Scientist and a Consultant



			Haematologist with subspecialist training in Transfusion Medicine.  The latter also has a sessional commitment in St. James's Hospital
8	The appropriate title to be used henceforth in Ireland will be Consultant Immunologist (clinical and laboratory).	Implemented	The title in use is Consultant Immunologist
9	Revised qualifications have been specified by Comhairle na nOspidéal for posts of Consultant Immunologist (clinical and laboratory) and also for posts with a special interest in paediatric immunology.	Implemented	The revised qualifications are accepted
10	Allergy services should be provided by consultant immunologists as part of their remit.	Implemented	Allergy services are provided by Consultant Immunologists
11	There should be a formal accreditation system for laboratories undertaking immunology tests	Implemented	All immunology laboratories are accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) to the ISO15189 Standard

### When will a new strategy will be produced?

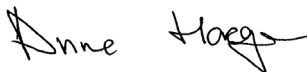
In December 2023, the HSE Executive Management Team adopted terms of reference of development of a strategy for laboratory services as a whole, to include immunology laboratory services.

This draft strategy document is currently at the stage of broad stakeholder consultation. The draft strategy document and accompanying template for feedback are available at

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/lsr/resources/programme-documents-resources.html>

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,




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**Anne Horgan**  
General Manager

### References

1. Report of the Committee on Immunology Services: adopted by Comhairle na nOspideal at its meeting on 24th November, 2000 / Comhairle na nOspideal  
Available at: <https://www.lenus.ie/handle/10147/44739>