



Oifig um Cheannasaí Seirbhíse do Chúram Príomhúil
Cúram Sláinte Phobail FSS an Mheán Iarthair
Ascaill Bhaile Choimín,
Páirc Gnó an Ráithín,
Ráithín, Luimneach V94 D1W9
Tel: 061 483226

Office of the Head of Service for Primary Care
HSE Mid West Community Healthcare
Ballycummin Ave,
Raheen Business Park,
Raheen, Limerick V94 D1W9
Tel: 061 483226

20th February 2024

Deputy Duncan Smith
Leinster House,
Kildare St., Dublin 2

Re: PQ 5866/24 - "To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the Chronic Disease Management Hub in Ennis in respect of services currently provided; and the roll out of additional services and staffing details of the hub."

Dear Deputy Smith,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in regard to your parliamentary question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Background

The Mid West Community Healthcare received funding for the provision of two Chronic Disease Teams in the Mid-West, one team for Limerick (Phase 1) and an Enhanced Chronic Disease Team for Co. Clare and North Tipperary (Phase 2). The Chronic Disease Service focuses on the three Chronic Disease Groups; Cardiovascular Disease, Respiratory Disease (including Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and Asthma) and Type II Diabetes. The teams work and support their colleagues in General Practice, Primary and Secondary Care to develop and implement ambulatory care pathways to prevent and manage complex Chronic Diseases.

In Co. Clare, the Chronic Disease Service is provided from a purpose built Chronic Disease Hub located in the Primary Care Centre, Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare. This facility opened in December 2022.

Staffing

A total of 20.7 WTE has been assigned for the Chronic Disease Team in Co. Clare. 16.2 WTE are currently in post. However, the current recruitment embargo has resulted in the pausing of recruiting the additional 4.5 WTE staff. This has impacted on the following grades of staff: 1 x Senior Dietician; 1 x Staff Grade Dietician; 1 x Senior Cardiac Rehabilitation Physiotherapist; 1 x Respiratory Clinical Nurse Specialist and 0.5 WTE Clinical Specialist Podiatrist.

Respiratory Services

A Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist commenced in the Respiratory Chronic Disease Services in April 2022 and has since been joined by two Senior Physiotherapists and one Respiratory Clinical Nurse Specialist. The Respiratory Services currently offered include, Community based Pulmonary Rehabilitation (face to face and virtual) and direct GP access to Respiratory Optimisation Clinics. The Mid West has approval for an Integrated Care Respiratory Consultant (50/50 commitment between UL Hospital Group and Mid West Community Health Organisation (CHO3)). This position was previously advertised but failed to attract suitably trained candidates. This position will be re-advertised in Q1 2024.

The Mid West also received approval to recruit 3.5 WTE Senior Respiratory Physiologists to progress the provision of direct GP access to Spirometry diagnostic testing. Despite numerous recruitment campaigns these positions have failed to fill and efforts to recruit internationally have been paused due to the recruitment embargo.

Diabetes Services

The Diabetes Service comprises of Clinical Nurse Specialists, Podiatrists and Dieticians. Two Clinical Nurse Specialists provide Nurse Led Diabetes Clinics in the Chronic Disease Hub and also in Health Centres and General Practitioner practices across Co. Clare. The Senior Dietician provides structured patient education and one to one consultations for patients with Type II Diabetes. A Staff Grade Dietician was appointed towards the end of 2023 and with this appointment Weight Management and Diabetes Prevention Clinics have commenced. There is 0.5 WTE Senior Podiatrist in post with a Staff Grade Podiatrist is due to start in March 2024.

The Mid West was recently approved funding for an Integrated Care Consultant Endocrinologist (50/50 commitment between UL Hospital Group and Mid West Community Health Organisation (CHO3). This post was recently advertised with a closing date of 9th February 2024.

Cardiology Services

The Chronic Disease Cardiology Service commenced in February 2024 and accepts direct referrals from all GPs in Co. Clare. The services provided include direct GP access to Cardiac Echocardiography and direct GP referral to a Consultant Cardiologist Led Clinic. A Heart Virtual Clinic commenced in December 2023 and is open to referrals from all GPs in the Mid-West. This service provides online, real-time discussions between GPs and a Consultant Cardiologist allowing speedy focused interactions and reduces the need for outpatient referral. Nurse led Cardiology Clinics have commenced and are currently accepting referrals from the Consultant Cardiologist with plans to extend this to direct referrals from GPs in the coming months.

A Cardiac Rehabilitation Clinical Nurse Manger and a Staff Nurse commenced in late 2023 and are planning the development of a community based Cardiac Rehabilitation Service in Co. Clare. The appointment of a Senior Physiotherapist is key to progressing the development of this service.

A Senior Medical Laboratory Scientist has commenced in UL Hospital Group and with the provision of this post, NT-proBNP blood screening is now available to General Practitioners.

Health Promotion Services

The Health Promotion services have expanded and are supporting the Chronic Disease services by providing additional preventative programmes such as "Making Every Contact Count", which is a programme that builds the capacity of health care workers to signpost and/or refer patients to preventative programmes. A weekly Quit Mid-West, Stop Smoking Clinic has commenced in the Chronic Disease Hub in Clare and this is due to increase to twice weekly as demand grows. "Minding Your Well Being", which is a programme run specifically for people with Chronic Disease has commenced across the Mid-West.

I trust this information addresses the issues raised in your representation.

Yours sincerely,



Margaret Costello
Head of Service
Primary Care