

1st August, 2024

David Cullinane T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

PQ ref. 29415/24

To ask the Minister for Health if all podiatry services previously at local health clinics across Sligo have been relocated to a central hub in Sligo town; if so, the reason; if this will be a permanent arrangement; the extent of staffing vacancies in this service; the number of approved posts which are unfilled; the number of posts subject to the recruitment moratorium; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane

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.

I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position for Community Healthcare Cavan Donegal Leitrim Monaghan Sligo.

There are two pathways through which service users can access the Primary Care Podiatry Service in the Sligo/ South Donegal and Leitrim/ West Cavan area. The first is the Community Healthcare Network (CHN) and the second is the Chronic Disease Management (CDM) Diabetes Service.

Community Healthcare Network

The CHN podiatrists manage the non-diabetic caseload and it operates clinics in Markievicz House in Sligo town, Ballymote, Enniscrone and Ballyshannon, County Donegal.

Currently, there are significant demands on the CHN, as it is functioning on less than its full approved cohort of staff. While there are four approved CHN Podiatrist posts, equating to a 3.8 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE), currently the CHN clinics are being operated by a 1.8 WTE.

The breakdown of the WTE deficit is as follows;

- 1.0 WTE is on Statutory Leave. Due to the HSE recruitment pause, it has not been possible to backfill this post.
- 1.0 WTE post is vacant. The process of filling this post has been impacted by the HSE recruitment embargo. We are currently unable to proceed to recruit to this post due to recruitment restrictions.

The deficit in staffing levels has resulted in a reduced service in the four locations, however contingency plans are in place for high priority referrals.

Chronic Disease Management Diabetes Service

The CDM Diabetes Service is based in the Benbulbin CDM Hub on the Clarion Road, Ballytivnan, Sligo. The podiatrists there are part of the Diabetes Team which has catchment area of Sligo/ South Donegal and Leitrim/ West Cavan.

There are also significant demands on the CDM Diabetes Service as it too is functioning on less than its full approved cohort of staff. Currently, only two of the three approved Podiatrist posts are filled.

The current status of the Podiatrist posts in the CDM Diabetes Service is as follows;

- One staff grade Podiatrist is in post.
- One temporary staff grade Podiatrist, recruited from an agency, is in post.
- One Clinical Specialist Podiatrist is currently on Statutory Leave. Due to the HSE recruitment pause it has not been possible to backfill this post.
- One Senior Podiatrist post, which is vacant. The process of filling this post has been impacted by the HSE recruitment pause. We are currently unable to proceed to recruit to this post due to recruitment restrictions.

As a consequence of the reduced staffing levels, some Diabetes Podiatry Services were temporarily only available in the CDM Hub in Sligo town between November 2023 and May 2024.

Priority must be given to diabetes patients with higher levels of risk and need. Therefore, in June 2024, some outreach clinics, for complex elderly patients with diabetes and who were unable to travel to Sligo town, recommenced in Carrick on Shannon, Ballinamore and Ballymote.

As the vacant Podiatry posts are filled, the current situation will be reviewed and outreach clinics may be extended.

The Podiatry Service acknowledges the impact of the vacant posts on service users and appreciates their patience and understanding during this time.

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



Mandy Doyle
Head Of Service Primary Care CHO1

Ceannasaí Seirbhíse, Seirbhísí Cúram Príomhúil
An Cabhán, Muineachán, Sligeach, Liatroim & Dún na nGall

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