



Office of the Head of Primary Care  
Services  
Community Health Organisation  
Midlands Louth Meath

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29<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Deputy Imelda Munster  
Leinster House  
Kildare St.  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ 33202/24 - To ask the Minister for Health the number of GPs in Drogheda; the number of GPs that are required to deal with the ongoing shortage; and if he will make a statement on the matter – Imelda Munster**

Dear Deputy Munster,

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 outlined the position as follows.

I write to respond to your PQ ref 33202/24 seeking the number of GPs in Drogheda and the number of GPs that are required to deal with the ongoing shortage. I can confirm there are currently 26 GMS GP's based within 18 GP practices in Drogheda, Co. Louth.

Under the GMS scheme, the HSE contracts GPs to provide medical services without charge to medical card and GP visit card holders.

The Government is aware of the workforce issues currently facing general practice and is working to ensure patients across the country continue to have access to GP services and that general practice is sustainable in all areas into the future.

GPs are self-employed practitioners and therefore may establish practices at a place of their own choosing. There is no prescribed ratio of GPs to patients and the State does not regulate the number of GPs that can set up in a town or community.

Under the GMS scheme, the HSE contracts GPs to provide medical services without charge to medical card and GP visit card holders.

Where a vacancy arises in a practice with a GMS contract, the HSE becomes actively involved in the recruitment process to find a replacement GP.

The Government is aware of the workforce issues currently facing general practice and is working to ensure patients across the country continue to have access to GP services and that general practice is sustainable in all areas into the future.

Improvements to GP's maternity and paternity leave arrangements, increased rural practice supports and a support for GPs in disadvantaged urban areas, have also been provided for. In addition, a steady increase has been seen in the number of doctors entering GP training over recent years, rising from 120 in 2009 to 350 in 2024.

These measures will see an increase in the number of GPs working in the State, improving access to GP services for patients throughout the country.



Access to GP Services:

There is no obligation on the state to provide a GP to private patients. In order to assign a patient to a GP they must hold a valid Medical Card.

If non-medical card, we can only advise and offer the patient a list of GP practices in their area or in the nearest town to them. We do not have any information regarding what GP's are accepting private patients.

On an emergency basis only, we have made calls on a patient's behalf to a GP surgery to try and assist with finding them a new GP. This is all based on their individual circumstances.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss same.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Ruane', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Joseph Ruane  
Head of Primary Care Services  
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation