

Neasa Hourigan TD  
The Green Party  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

Email: [neasa.hourigan@oireachtas.ie](mailto:neasa.hourigan@oireachtas.ie)

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**PQ 24193/24**

**To ask the Minister for Health the clinical lead, relevant acute settings and organisation of services in place in the provision of onco-genetic testing and counselling in the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter -Neasa Hourigan**

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

Currently, specialist genetics services for hereditary cancer are provided in St James's Hospital (SJH) Cancer Genetics Service (adults only) and at the Department of Clinical Genetics, Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Crumlin (adult and paediatric). Referrals are received from both primary and secondary care. Services engage with patients via a range of in-person, virtual and telephone clinics and postal methods.

Services provided include:

- Genetic/family risk assessment, education and genetic counselling
- Germline testing
- Interpretation of results, including variants of uncertain significance
- Recommendations in relation to appropriate follow-up and ongoing management
- Cascade germline testing for relatives
- Reproductive options and information

Patients are typically discharged to the referring clinician, with follow-up recommendations.

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP), a directorate of the HSE, is the lead agency responsible for delivering many of the recommendations of the National Cancer Strategy, including those pertaining to cancer genetics and genomics. Development of cancer genetic and genomic services is a priority for the NCCP, and is recognised as a growing and integral part of cancer care, with a role across treatment, early detection and risk reduction. The NCCP Hereditary Cancer Model of Care, launched June 2023, focuses on the clinical services required for the identification of cancer predisposition and for the ongoing management of those with a predisposition. A multidisciplinary Implementation Steering Group, Chaired by The National Director of the NCCP, is in place to guide implementation of the Model of Care.

Membership includes Professor David Gallagher, Consultant Medical Oncologist/Medical Geneticist, and current National Clinical Programme Lead in Cancer Genetics.

Development of genetics and genomics services in Ireland, to benefit all relevant clinical disciplines, is a current priority. The National Strategy for Accelerating Genetic and Genomic Medicine in Ireland was published in December 2022. The Specialist Cancer Genetics Service represents a core component of overall clinical genetics services in Ireland. The National Genetics and Genomics Office (NGGO), established in 2023 to drive implementation of the Strategy, will provide governance for the Specialist Cancer Genetics Service in collaboration with the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP). The NGGO is responsible for coordinating a national approach to genetics and genomics, supporting the development of a skilled genetic and genomic workforce (including genetic counsellors), enhancing clinical services for patients and families, and strengthening laboratory and data infrastructure to drive advances in genetic and genomic medicine services.

Implementation of the Hereditary Cancer Model of Care and the National Strategy for Accelerating Genetic and Genomic Medicine in Ireland will be multi-year projects requiring adequate funding and resourcing.

Yours sincerely,

*Dr. Heather Burns*

Dr Heather Burns

Consultant in Public Health Medicine (MCRN 400207)  
National Cancer Control Programme

