

18th November, 2024

Mr. Michael McGrath, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref: 44532/24

"To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on plans to increase general practitioner numbers (details supplied) in Cork city suburbs, particularly on the southern side; and if he will make a statement on the matter."

Detail Supplied: "Constituents are having great difficulty in securing a place as a patient in their local practices and are being turned away."

Dear Deputy McGrath,

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.

GPs enter the GMS scheme in 2 ways. They are contracted, following a campaign by the HSE to identify and contract a GMS GP, for a GMS panel that has become vacant due to the resignation or retirement of an existing GMS GP.

In this scenario, the GP uptakes the responsibility for an existing panel of GMS cardholders, and is remunerated with capitation, subsidies and grant payments according to the provisions in the GMS contract and associated circulars.

We do not have any current vacancies in Cork City. A vacancy arose on 1st July 2024, in the north side of the city, for which a recruitment campaign was undertaken earlier this year, and the successful GMS GP will uptake responsibility for that panel on 6th November 2024. An interim GMS GP service came into place on 1st July 2024, and has continued for the duration of this vacancy.

A further vacancy is due to arise on 31st December 2024. A recruitment campaign commenced immediately upon receipt of the 3 month resignation notification. The campaign will close to applications on 29th November 2024. Shortlisting and Interviews will be undertaken promptly thereafter. An interim GMS GP service is currently being finalised and will be in place from 1st January 2025 to ensure GMS GP service continuity for this GMS panel until a new GP has been identified and contracted. Once the particulars have been finalised communication in relation to same will issue to GMS cardholders at the end of November 2024.

In an alternative approach, GPs can enter the GMS by Open Entry which allows for GPs to contract into the GMS and commence to build a GMS panel from zero. The GP starts with 0 GMS cardholders, but as he/she builds her panel, the associated capitation/subsidies and grant payments apply in terms of remuneration.

Training places for GPs on the Cork and Kerry GP Training schemes have increased steadily in recent years in line with national provisions around the expansion of the GP training programme in the country. The intake to 1st year on the Cork Training Scheme doubled in July 2024 under the accelerated intake agreed with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP).

The process of assigning GMS Cardholders to GP's is undertaken by a centralised unit within the HSE.

Where a GMS cardholder has tried to change GPs but has failed/been refused by at least 3 GPs, assignment to a GP can be arranged. The GMS cardholder must liaise with the Client Registration Unit within the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) in respect of requesting to be assigned to a GP.

The contact details are hereunder:

Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) -Client Registration Unit,
PO Box 11745,
4th Floor,
Finglas,
Dublin 11
D11 XKF3

Phone: [0818 22 44 78](tel:0818224478) (LoCall)

Email: clientregistration@hse.ie

Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) will assign a GMS patient to a new GMS GP. Until Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) has formalised the new arrangement, a patient's current GP will remain their GMS GP to ensure continuity of service.

Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) utilise a process for assigning GMS cardholders to GPs, ensuring where possible to link the patient with a GP in their geographical area in line with the ceilings on GP assignments per the 2023 GP Agreement.

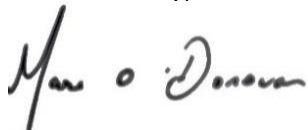
The GP GMS contract covers the area of assignment of a patient to a GP as follows:

"The assignment of a patient by the Health Service Executive shall be to an available medical practitioner, who has entered into an agreement for the provision of services practising in the area. Assignments shall be reviewed on the request of the medical practitioner at any time after the expiration of six months from the date of assignment."

Where Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) are experiencing difficulty assigning a patient, they may refer to the local Primary Care Unit, for assistance or guidance which is provided upon request.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Mari O'Donovan
Interim Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare