



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

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22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024

**Deputy Michael Lowry**  
**Constituency Office**  
**Abbey Road, Thurles**  
**Co. Tipperary**

**Re: PQ 40420/24 - "To ask the Minister for Health if he will address the urgent staffing and resource issues at Roscrea Primary Care Centre; if he is aware that a Community Registered Nurse (CRGN) on maternity leave has not been fully replaced, leading to reduced nursing cover; if he will expedite the approval for increased hours for the CRGN covering this maternity to address the staffing shortages and ensure the effective delivery of Primary Care Services in Roscrea; and if he will make a statement on the matter."**

Dear Deputy Lowry,

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.

I note the contents of your representation. I can advise that the new Primary Care Centre in Roscrea will become operational in Quarter 1, 2025. This new modern building will provide patients and staff with state of the art facilities, where the clinical rooms have been designed to a very high standard and meet all recommended Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) guidelines. On occasions when access to clinical space has been limited at Cre House, Roscrea, patients have to attend HSE clinics in either Nenagh or Thurles. I will outline hereunder the level of HSE Primary Care Services provided to patients living in Roscrea and surrounding areas:

**Community Nursing Service:**

The Director of Public Health Nursing (DPHN) with responsibility for Nth. Tipperary confirmed that the WTE compliment for the Community Nursing Service covering Roscrea is as follows:

- 2 WTE x Public Health Nurse (PHN)
- 1 WTE x Community Registered Nurse (CRGN)

As advised in your representation, the CRGN is currently on maternity leave. To address the gap in service delivery, the DPHN reconfigured the nursing services in the area and an additional 0.5 WTE CRGN was allocated to Roscrea. The CRGN had agreed to increase her hours to 1 WTE, however, due to the restrictions on WTEs as a result of the Pay and Numbers Strategy this increase in hours has not been approved. I can advise that whilst the HSE Recruitment Pause has been 'lifted', recruitment can only proceed in line with the HSE Pay & Numbers Strategy.

The DPHN advised that in order to enhance the community nursing services in the Roscrea area, she subsequently reconfigured the PHN service in the Templemore and Thurles areas to support the service in Roscrea. Currently, the resulting CRGN vacancy in Roscrea is 0.2 WTE.

### **Primary Care Services in Roscrea:**

The Community Healthcare Network Manager (CHNM) for North Tipperary has provided the following information around staffing resources for Primary Care Services in the Roscrea area. As advised above, when clinical space is limited at Cre House, Roscrea, patients have to attend HSE clinics in either Nenagh or Thurles.

| <b>Discipline/Service</b>              | <b>Approved WTE</b>                                 | <b>WTE in post</b> | <b>Comment</b>                                     |
|--|---|--------------------|--|
| Occupational Therapy                   | 1 Staff Grade                                       | 1 Staff Grade      |  |
| Occupational Therapy (Paediatric post) | 1 Senior Grade                                      | 1 Senior Grade     | Covering Nth. Tipperary Network area               |
| Physiotherapy (Adults)                 | 1 Senior Grade                                      | 1 Senior           | Agency cover in place                              |
| Physiotherapy (Paediatric)             | 1 Senior Grade                                      | 1Senior            | Covering Nth. Tipperary Network area               |
| Speech & Language Therapy (Adults)     | 1Senior Grade                                       | 1Senior            | Post holder covers Thurles, Templemore and Roscrea |
| Speech & Language Therapy (Paediatric) | 0.4 Senior Grade                                    | 0.4 Senior Grade   |  |
| Dietetics (Paediatric & Adults)        | 1 Staff Grade (Adults)<br>0.86 Senior Grade (Paeds) | 1.86               | Covering Nth. Tipperary Network area               |
| Podiatry                               | 1 Senior Grade                                      | 1 Senior Grade     | Covering Nth. Tipperary Network area               |
| Social Worker                          | 1 Senior Grade                                      | 0                  | Post vacant. Cross cover in place.                 |

### **Social Inclusion Services:**

In your representation, you include a request for additional resources to support the IPAS applicants and Ukrainian Refugees who are now residing in the Roscrea area. The Asst. Director of Public Health Nursing (ADPHN) for Social Inclusion Services has provided the following details regarding staffing resources attached to the Migrant Health Team in the Roscrea area:

There are three International Protection Applicant (IPA) facilities in Roscrea, with a total number of 490 clients. The newest facility is located at Racket Hall which has 154 residents, including many children. The residents of Racket Hall have been unable to secure the services of a General Practitioner (GP) as the local GPs in the area are at full capacity. GP services for these residents are currently being provided by the Inclusion Health Clinic, in Limerick City which is ran by Dr. Patrick O'Donnell, GP. Dr. O'Donnell is attached to the HSE Mid West Social Inclusion Service.

In total, there are 16 children residing in Racket Hall who are under the age of 5 years. These children were assessed by the PHN for Migrant Health on arrival and following their initial assessment, any necessary onward referrals arranged. These children are then referred back to the local PHN in the area. The PHN for Migrant Health is a 0.7 WTE post with a regional remit covering the HSE Mid West area (Clare, Limerick and Nth. Tipperary).

The ADPHN advised that there are 114 Ukrainian residents in the Sacred Heart Convent in Roscrea. Similar to the situation outlined above, these residents were also unable to secure the services of a GP as the local GPs did not have the capacity to take them on. These residents attend the Midwest GP Response Clinic in Limerick City for GP services which is supported by the Social Inclusion Service in the HSE Mid West area. In total, there are 13 children residing in the Sacred Heart Convent who are under the age of 5 years. These children were assessed by the PHN for Migrant Health on arrival and following their initial assessment, any necessary onward referrals arranged.

The HSE Mid West Social Inclusion Service also provide the following services across the Nth. Tipperary area including Roscrea:

- **Traveller Health:** 1 WTE dedicated PHN is based in Nenagh but covers the entire Nth. Tipperary Traveller Community. This post is currently vacant as the post holder is on leave until June 2025.
- **Homelessness:** 0.6 WTE dedicated PHN is based in Nenagh but covers the Homelessness service across Nth. Tipperary.
- **Addiction Services:** (the following staff are based in Nenagh, but cover the Nth. Tipperary area):
  - Dedicated Outreach Worker
  - Addiction Counsellor
  - Satellite Opiate Substitution Clinic (weekly clinic held in Nenagh on Tuesdays between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.)

### **Chronic Disease Services:**

The HSE has established Chronic Disease Services in North Tipperary and the Chronic Disease Hub is located in Thurles Primary Care Centre. The Hub will relocate to the Primary Care Centre in Nenagh once it becomes fully operational.

The HSE Mid West received funding for the provision of two Chronic Disease Teams in the Mid-West, one team for Limerick and an enhanced Chronic Disease Team for Co. Clare, North Tipperary and East Limerick. 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. These teams have a mix of disciplines including Clinical Nurse Specialists, Physiotherapists, Dietitians, Podiatrists and Psychologists. 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.

Services are delivered on a "hub and spoke" model, ensuring care is accessible and delivered close to where patients live. Services are also offered from other local Primary Care and Health Centres across North Tipperary and East Limerick along with Community Venues where appropriate. The goal is to align with the principles of Sláintecare, ensuring patients receive the right care, at the right place, at the right time. Out of the 22.7 full-time positions (WTE) allocated to this program, to date 11.7 staff have been recruited.

### **Diabetes Service**

A Clinical Nurse Specialist for Diabetes is providing services across Nth. Tipperary/East Limerick including Cre House, Roscrea. Diabetes Education Groups are ongoing in Castletroy and Nenagh offering both Discover Diabetes Education and the Desmond Programme to patients with Type II Diabetes. There are one to one Dietetic consultations also provided for people who require additional support. There are plans to expand service provision to other areas in North Tipperary

Once staffing levels allow. Chronic Disease Management Podiatry services are currently provided in Thurles and in Nenagh, with plans to add more locations as staffing increases.

### Respiratory Service

Our Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist along with two Snr. Physiotherapists provide GP access to Respiratory Optimisation Clinics for all GPs located in North Tipperary/East Limerick. Clinics are provided in Primary Care Centres located in Thurles, Nenagh and Roscrea with plans to extend clinics to include Castletroy Primary Care Centre in January 2025.

The community based Pulmonary Rehabilitation Programmes commenced in Nenagh in 2022, and has since expanded to include Thurles and most recently Roscrea. The programme in Roscrea proved to be a huge success and there are plans to facilitate a second programme early next year. In addition the Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist has provided assistance in setting up a COPD support group specifically for the population of Roscrea and is providing ongoing support to ensure it continues.

### Cardiology Services

An Integrated Care Consultant Cardiologist commenced in October 2023 to support both the Acute Service in ULHG and to lead out on the development of community based Cardiology Services. This Consultant is currently focusing on Limerick but plans to extend services to include North Tipperary by late 2024. A Cardiology Clinical Nurse Specialist from North Tipperary is supporting the provision of Chronic Disease Management services in Limerick and most recently is supporting the delivery of Acute Heart Failure Services in Nenagh General Hospital. This is in preparation for the provision of Community based Cardiology services to the population of North Tipperary.

In your representation you mention the implementation of measures to support patients who are at an educational disadvantage in the Roscrea catchment area. Any queries regarding educational supports would need to be addressed by the Dept. of Education.

I trust the information above addresses the issues raised in our representation.

**Yours sincerely,**



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**Margaret Costello**  
**Head of Service**  
**Primary Care**