Opening the front door

Access to general practice, from strategy to delivery

Fintan Foy, Chief Executive Officer, Irish College of GPs

National Primary Care Summit · 19th November 2026 · Keadeen Hotel, Newbridge

About the speaker

Fintan Foy

Chief Executive Officer, Irish College of GPs

Since 2017

leading the Irish College of GPs

30+ years

in healthcare, medical education and regulation

Our vision

For patients

Timely access to a named GP, continuity of care, and care closer to home

For the system

Fewer unscheduled ED attendances and admissions; better value for public investment

For GP teams

A sustainable workload, with built infrastructure to treat patients and train the next generation

The policy direction is clear. What is required now is implementation.

General practice is the front door to care

29m

GP consultations every year

100,000+

patients seen each working day

380,000

medicines prescribed each working day

<4%

of the health budget

1.5 million *urgent out-of-hours GP consultations a year — and only* ***13%*** *are referred on to the emergency department.*

Source: Irish College of GPs, Pre-Budget Submission 2027 (September 2026)

Demand is rising faster than capacity

Demand

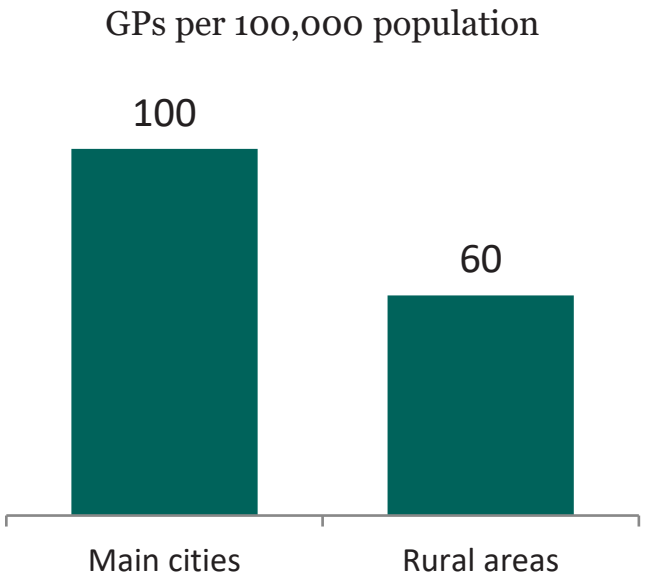
+75,000	more people in Ireland every year
+23,000	more people aged 65+ every year
>90%	of over-65s see their GP at least once a year
4.8 / 3.4	GP consultations per adult a year (women / men)

Supply

4,900	GPs in practice, up 5% on 2024
~600	GPs approaching retirement
500+	GPs working in solo practices

Source: Irish College of GPs, Pre-Budget Submission 2027 (September 2026)

Access is uneven: three pressure points



1 Rural communities

Donegal, North Mayo, Leitrim, Cavan: dispersed populations, ageing solo GPs, retirement without succession

2 Urban deprivation

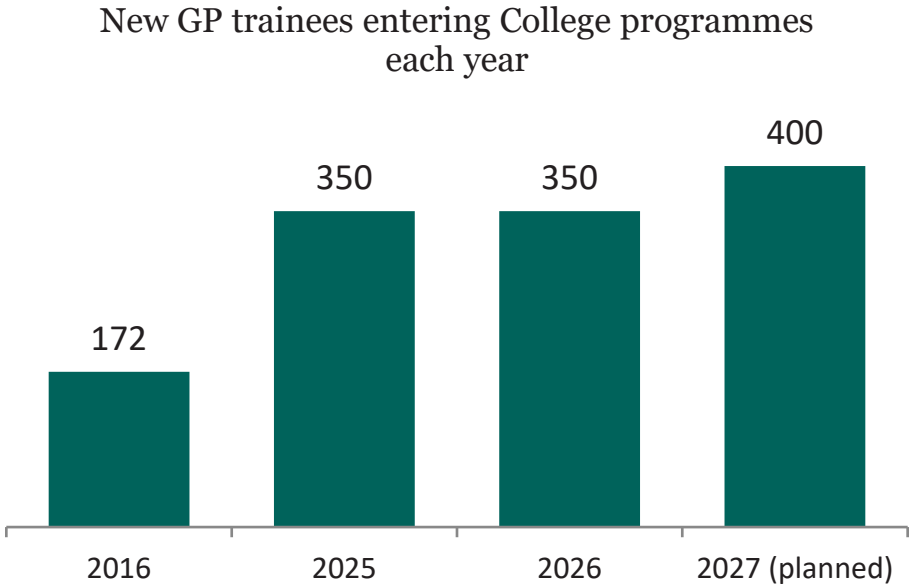
Finglas, Coolock: high and complex need; without timely GP access, patients turn to ED

3 Commuter belt

Kildare, North Louth, Wicklow: population growth has outpaced GP premises and practice expansion

Sources: Irish College of GPs, Analysis of GP Shortages (March 2026); Pre-Budget Submission 2027

The training pipeline is working



1,350
GPs in training today

85%
of 2016–2023 graduates practising as GPs in Ireland

220+
international GPs placed in rural practice through IMG Rural (110 completed, 110 currently on the programme)

Sources: Irish College of GPs, Pre-Budget Submission 2027; Analysis of GP Shortages (March 2026)

We are training the GPs… they need infrastructure to see patients.

90%

of GP clinics are independently owned and financed by GPs themselves — not publicly funded Primary Care Centres

Premises are now the single greatest practical barrier to expanding capacity. For newly qualified GPs, the capital cost of a practice — especially in the commuter belt — is often out of reach.

Five levers to open the front door

1	**Connected care**	Shared records anchored in GP systems; CDM for everyone (GMS & Private); risk of “task shifting” – squanders finite GP capacity
2	**GP workforce**	Grow training to 400 a year; fellowships, rural retention and national locum support
3	**GP teams**	A GP Team 2030 programme; double general practice nursing
4	**Built infrastructure**	A National GP Premises Development Fund and practice expansion grants
5	**Data and quality**	A National GP Data Strategy that is time- and cost-neutral for practices

Source: Irish College of GPs, Pre-Budget Submission 2027 (September 2026)

Our commitment

We are committed to working with stakeholders to implement novel, effective solutions at scale & pace, to address patient access and GP infrastructure deficits.

Thank you

Fintan Foy, Chief Executive Officer, Irish College of GPs

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