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24/06/2019

Deputy Michael Harty
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 22661/19

To ask the Minister for Health the provision that can be made to refund taxi transport for patients attending hospital appointments that have no access to transport especially patients with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

-Michael Harty

Dear Deputy Harty,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

The HSE does not have a statutory requirement to provide transport, however it is recognised that many people could not access services without HSE support and as an organisation we endeavour to subsidise travel for service users where appropriate and where it is within budgetary limits. We do not fund taxi services and people normally rely on family or if in care, care staff. Nationally there may be some local discretion to fund taxis within available resources. If in financial hardship people can approach the Community Welfare Officer now in the Department of Social Protection.

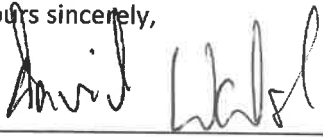
Specifically in relation to people with disabilities as a general rule public transport should be used in all circumstances where it is an option. This is in keeping with the principle of mainstreaming with a clear focus on ensuring persons with a disability have access to the normal range of services and participate in community life as far as possible. It must be noted that in general service users are in receipt of disability allowance and are automatically entitled to the Free Travel Pass, so there should be no additional cost burden at an individual level. The HSE has liaised with the National Transport Authority and disability service providers to explore ways in which the Authority's services could assist people with disabilities. The National Transport Authority has a total of 17 Transport co-ordinating units called Local Link which provide safe secure and reliable Public Transport services in local and rural areas of Ireland through a combination of scheduled Public Transport services and door to door services.

The HSE is also working with the National Transport Authority to carry out a national survey of existing transport provision within disability services, to establish the extent of transport provision available within disability services, the current cost of the provision, identify the gaps in provision and make recommendations for better use of existing resources. The HSE was successful in securing Dormant Account Monies to fund this project which will map all Disability transport routes nationally. A number of meetings were held with the Department

of Transport, NTA and Jacobs (the company secured by the NTA to carry out the project work). A Presentation was made by the NTA and Jacobs to the National Consultative Forum members. Following on from this, meetings have been arranged with the three Umbrella Organisations (National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Inclusion Ireland and the Disability Federation of Ireland) to present an overview of the project. In addition, a national meeting will be held in the midlands in April to train the staff to complete the required documentation. Jacobs are currently working on the documentation for distribution. The HSE will support the project through the provision of administrative backup. The timeline for the completion of this project is the end of December 2019.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Walsh', written over a horizontal line.

David Walsh,
National Director,
Community Operations