



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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Deputy Niamh Smyth TD,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

06th November 2019

PQ 42471/19* To ask the Minister for Health the reason patients going across the Border for treatment are waiting for arrears payment from the HSE; the number of cases that have been dealt with in 2019; the number waiting to be reimbursed; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Smyth,

Thank you for your PQ above, which has been forwarded to me for direct reply.

The table below outlines the available data up 31st October 2019 relative to your enquiry.

Activity Description	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Reimbursements processed	7	150	1,025	2,011	3,886	3,795*
Cost of reimbursements	€29,265	€585,863	€2,499,967	€4,433,642	€12,288,398	€9,754,462*

**Figures are compiled based on data available at specific point in time (01/11/2019).*

It is evident from the above that the Cross Border Directive (CBD) scheme activity has increased exponentially each year, and continues to do so.

When the CBD was established in 2014, there were no resources allocated to its operation. To date the CBD office has been operating by using resources (accommodation and staffing) redeployed from the Treatment Abroad Scheme office (which have been backfilled via agency personnel) and in latter months with significant agency personnel. This is far from ideal. There is a high turnover in agency staff who secure permanent employment elsewhere resulting in lost resources on an ongoing basis with specific reference to time, training and knowledge.

However, considerable work has been done to address these resourcing issues which has led to the backlog. The initiatives taken to date to deal with the backlog include:

- Use of overtime. This has had some but limited impact on the backlog.
- Acute Hospitals HR department has provided significant support to the Cross Border Directive management in organising the conversion of agency staffing into full time WTEs. Nine grade III WTEs are due to take up duty in November and two Grade VIs have already taken up duty which is of significant assistance.
- The office accommodation in which the CBD operates is not sufficient to accommodate additional staff and certainly not sufficient for the numbers of staff that will ultimately be required to operate the National Contact Point. Alternative office accommodation has been identified and it is anticipated with the assistance of the HSE Estates Dept the National Contact Point will relocate into rented office accommodation in November to coincide with the additional staff appointments.

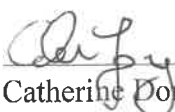
When the additional staff are in situ in the new office accommodation it will be possible to give a realistic estimate of how soon the backlog will be cleared.

All of the above actions should go a long way to address much of the backlog but will not of themselves be sufficient for the appropriate ongoing operation of the Scheme. It is anticipated that to operate the Cross Border Directive on an ongoing basis in a quality and timeliness which the public deserve will require a minimum of 30 WTEs and we will continue to liaise with the Dept of Health to secure the funding and approval for these resources.

I can confirm that at present there is currently 3,750 items of post overdue for processing and we are working with approximately a 3 month back log of claims. I sincerely regret the delay in the processing of claims, but can confirm that we are working diligently to overcome same in the shortest possible timeframe available.

If you have any queries, or would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0872668759 or via catherinet.donohoe@hse.ie.

Yours sincerely,


Catherine Donohoe
A/Assistant National Director