



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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9th June 2020

Deputy Carol Nolan,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: carol.nolan@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Nolan,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary questions, which were submitted to this department for response.

PQ 4543/20

To ask the Minister for Health if one cane per year will be funded for each blind or vision impaired person that needs to use one; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

HSE Disability Services has been allocated c. €2 billion in 2020. This funding is providing Disability Services throughout the country to children and adults with physical, sensory, intellectual disability and autism.

The 2020 HSE Service Plan sets out, at a high level, the anticipated service activity levels that are to be delivered during 2020 commensurate with this substantial state investment.

The majority of disability service provision in Ireland has historically and continues to be provided by voluntary agencies, which are funded under Section 38 and Section 39 of the Health Act 2004. The HSE works in partnership with these agencies to ensure the best level of service possible is provided to people with a disability and their families, within the resources available.

There is continuous engagement between the HSE, the Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) and these agencies to ensure resources are prioritised on the basis of meeting the needs of people with a disability and those caring for them.

Services for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Services for people who are blind or visually impaired are provided as part of Physical and Sensory disability services and are delivered directly and in partnership with a number of voluntary service providers, including NCBI, Childvision, the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind; the National Association of Housing for the Visually Impaired; and Fighting Blindness.

Persons with a disability, including those with sight loss and vision impairment, may also be eligible for various aids, which are of assistance to people who are blind or visually impaired including canes and guide dogs.

There are various types of canes available depending on the individual needs and requirements of the person who is blind or visually impaired. These include white canes, symbol canes, long canes and guide canes all of which have differing uses for the individual who requires them. Canes are available from the National Council for the Blind which is funded by the HSE.

National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI)

NCBI is a not for profit charitable organisation which provides support and services nationwide to people experiencing sight loss. The overall aim of NCBI services is to enable people to live an independent life of their choice.

HSE Disability Services has a high regard for NCBI and funds the agency, under Section 39 of the Health Act to provide a range of centre, domiciliary and community based services to people who are blind or vision impaired. This funding is governed by a number of Service Arrangements in all 9 CHO Areas, which identify service delivery provided by the agency in return for the money being provided to them. The Service Arrangements are reviewed on an annual basis. The Service arrangements do not go into the specific details about the provision of canes to its service users, however NCBI supplies one cane per person, per year free of charge and two free cane tips if needed. NCBI will also review any person who may need an additional cane if required.

NCBI received funding of €6.55 million in 2018 and 2019 from HSE Disability Services and is scheduled to receive funding of €6,626,945 in 2020.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr. Cathal Morgan,
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations**