



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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25th May 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 question, which was submitted to this department for response.

PQ 4571/20

To ask the Minister for Health if his Department will digitalise its records in order that it can easily retrieve statistics on the number of blind and vision impaired persons that have received its supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

The Department of Health has requested that the HSE, in relation to this PQ, respond to the Deputy regarding the number of blind and vision impaired persons in receipt of supports and services.

Persons with Disabilities, including blind and vision impaired can access the broad range of Acute, Primary and Community based services as well as specialist disability services, which are provided in a variety of community and residential settings in partnership with service users, their families and carers and a range of statutory, non-statutory voluntary and community groups.

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.

The Health Service Executive does not currently collect information specifically on persons who are blind or vision impaired. The National Physical and Sensory Disability Database (NPSDD) annual report presents data on the specialised health and personal social service use and requirements of people with a physical or sensory disability. The NPSDD is currently being replaced by the National Ability Support Services (NASS) Database and therefore the most recent figures published by the Health Research Board (HRB) relate to 2017 and show that about 4% of the total number of people registered on the database had a visual disability. However, participation in the database is voluntary and therefore not every individual in Ireland, who has a disability, consents to inclusion on the database. This is a reflection that such individuals may not be availing of, or requiring, a specialised disability health and personal social services and may therefore access services and supports through the generic Primary Care Services. Therefore, the database does not provide any definitive

epidemiological statement on the number of people with a particular type of disability or diagnosis, nor does it cover the proportion of people living in Ireland who have a disability and have chosen not to register.

However, we can say that the HSE funds National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) to provide a range of centre, domiciliary and community based services to around 7,000 people who are blind or vision impaired. The HSE also provides a Supplementary Blind Welfare Allowance to around 3,500 people who are blind or visually impaired.

Yours sincerely,



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