



27th November 2020

Deputy Bríd Smith,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 37140/20 - To ask the Minister for Health the supports available from the HSE for parents of all children whose condition requires new glasses and ongoing treatment and examination each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

-Bríd Smith

Dear Deputy Smith,

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.

Children have their eyes checked at birth by the Hospital Paediatric Team. The eyes are also checked by the Public Health Nurse at the neonatal visit and are checked by the GP at the 2 week and 6 week visits. Children have universal access to an ongoing vision surveillance programme with public health nursing until they commence school. Upon entry to school, they undergo a vision screen; the purpose of this screen is to detect amblyopia and not a general myopia/ hyperopia. Amblyopia is the reduction of visual acuity in one or both eyes usually in an otherwise normal eye.

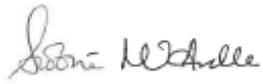
Children with eye/visual impairments are referred to Primary Care Eye Teams, comprising of community ophthalmic physicians, orthoptists, optometrists & nurses (staffing varies across locations). If the primary care eye team identifies that a child requires glasses, the child can access the glasses from a community optometrist/dispensing optician under the Community Ophthalmic Services Scheme (COSS). They will continue to be reviewed by the Primary Care Eye Team and provided with updated prescriptions, as required.

The HSE is planning to facilitate the discharge of children aged 8+ years to their local community optometrist, if their community ophthalmic physician decides that they are suitable to have all their follow up care provided by a community optometrist.

As set by legislation, if a visual impairment or eye health issue is detected at school vision screening, a child/young person will receive eye care services up until the age 16 years. If the parents of a child/young person have a medical card, the child/young person will also receive eye care services up until the age 16 years. All other children/young people will receive primary care eye services up until the age of 12 years.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Siobhán McArdle,
Head of Operations Primary Care,
Community Operations