

27th October 2020

Ms Niamh Smyth T.D.,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ ref 30781/20 - €4 Per Day Charge for Service Users to attend Day Services via bus - DSPQ19113(3)**

**Details**

***To ask the Minister for Health the status of a €4 PER DAY charge for service users to attend day services via bus; his plans to review this charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - N Smyth***

Dear Deputy Smyth,

I refer to your recent correspondence in relation to the €4 per day charge for Service Users to attend Day Services via bus in Counties Cavan and Monaghan. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The provision of transport for clients accessing HSE Services is a particular challenge in Community Healthcare Organisation Area 1 (CHO1), where public transport is limited. While the HSE does not have a statutory requirement to provide non-emergency transport, it is recognised that many people could not access services without HSE transport support.

A process was initiated in Donegal in 2008 to create a partnership with Local Rural Transport Companies – now SITT/Local Link (Donegal) which operated as a charity with support from the National Transport Authority.

The model operating in Donegal is governed by a memorandum of understanding between HSE/SITT, Local Link (Donegal) whereby the service is managed by SITT/Local Link who tender for providers and manage transport provision. The model in Sligo/Leitrim is similar and was originally introduced in 2012 with a Service Level Agreement at the outset between the HSE/Local Link. Charges in these areas have been in place since that time.

Local Link are the Transport Coordination Units (TCU) appointed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) to deliver all rural public transport in each area. They design and tender new and existing transport routes to deliver transport services. All Local Link units operate as a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status managed by a voluntary board of directors.

The services previously operating across Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo have now expanded into Cavan and Monaghan in partnership with Cavan Monaghan Local Link.

The Services provided are:

- Safe and of the highest quality

- Fully accessible - providing an enhanced travel experience for all passengers.
- Best value for money
- Co-ordinated and managed in a professional manner by people who have an expertise in the area of transport provision
- Reviewed continuously to ensure shorter passenger journey times

Benefits to Service Users:

- Increased number of routes
- Shorter journey times
- Door to Door Transport where possible for people attending HSE funded day services
- Wherever possible, passengers wishing to access HSE services will be prioritised on existing Local Link public routes. Information in relation to these routes can be accessed on [www.locallink.ie](http://www.locallink.ie)
- Improved quality of vehicles
- Assigned designated drivers per service so that relationships and trust are developed between passenger and driver, offering peace of mind for passengers and their families
- A Health and Safety Management system is implemented by Local Link with its transport providers who monitor the delivery of services on a regular basis
- All drivers are Garda Vetted and will have undertaken required driver training. Additional training is also provided to assist passengers with mobility issues
- Local Link provides services through transport providers who are fully licensed with respect to passenger transport regulations and registered with the National Transport Authority. This ensures overall professional management and coordination of the transport provision by Local Link

Given the increasing cost of transport and escorts and to enable the continued delivery of this essential service it is necessary to retain the standard €4 daily charge for all users in CHO 1 which was introduced on 1st April, 2019.

The HSE CHO1 looks forward to continued working with the Local Rural Transport Companies, which are registered community and voluntary organisations, to further develop and enhance the transport service currently available across CHO 1.

The HSE is committed to an integrated model of transport to maximise efficiencies and promote public transport delivery.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,




---

**Edel Quinn**  
**Head of Service Disability CHO1**  
**Ceann na Seirbhíse Míchumas**  
**Eagraíocht Chúram Sláinte Limistéar 1**