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5<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Deputy Neasa Hourigan,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ 1653/21 - To ask the Minister for Health the income disregards for blind welfare allowance applications taking into consideration the variations nationwide; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

**-Neasa Hourigan**

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

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.

Blind Welfare Allowance (BWA) is part of special services for blind persons under the Blind Persons Act, 1920. It is a means-tested payment from the HSE to people, aged 18 and over, who are blind or visually impaired.

To qualify for blind welfare allowance any one of these requirements must be met:

- The person is in receipt of a blind pension from the Department of Social Protection
- The person is in receipt of an income maintenance payment from the Department of Social Protection or an equivalent type payment from another country and has a certificate of visual impairment from an ophthalmologist or has a letter from the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI).
- The person has an income below the combined Blind Pension rate and blind welfare allowance rate and has a certificate of visual impairment from an ophthalmologist or has a letter from the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI).

Applications for the BWA are made to each CHO's local Health Office in Primary Care. See

<https://www2.hse.ie/services/blind-welfare-allowance/#>

Blind Welfare Allowance is a means tested payment, therefore the rate of the Blind Welfare Allowance payable is determined on the basis of the total assessable income of the applicant.

Please see the HSE 2009 guidelines attached which provides information on calculation of allowances and income which should not be considered as means for the purpose of calculating BWA.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne O'Neill', written over a horizontal line.

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Yvonne O'Neill,  
Interim National Director,  
Community Operations