



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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11th October 2021

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 46483/21

To ask the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to produce CHO segregated annual figures related to adults and children with a diagnosis of vision impairment and in relation to their engagement with health and or disability services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

HSE Disability Services has been allocated c. €2.2 billion in 2021. This funding is providing Disability Services throughout the country to children and adults with physical, sensory, intellectual disability and autism.

Disability services are provided based on the presenting needs of an individual rather than by the diagnosis of the individual or the actual type of disability or service required. Services are provided following individual assessment according to the person's individual requirements and care needs. Care and/or services provided are tailored to the individual needs and requirements of the child/adult with profound sensory disabilities.

Historically many children with significant visual impairments accessed the specialised School for the Blind in Dublin. Currently most children with visual impairments access education and health services locally.

The HSE does not collate nationally the number of children and young persons that have a blind or vision impairment diagnosis in Ireland, however each CHO area would be aware of the needs and requirements of children with disabilities including blindness or vision impairment in each area.

In addition, it is not possible to produce segregated figures for services provided to people with a diagnosis of vision impairment.

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.

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 and appliances which are of assistance and are mostly funded through primary care services.

The HSE also provides a Supplementary Blind Welfare Allowance to around 3,500 people who are blind or visually impaired.

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.

NCBI provide services to over 7,000 people every year. Almost 95% of these people have some degree of useful vision while less than 5% are blind.

NCBI offers community based services to help people to adapt to sight loss and maintain their independence. These services include emotional support to the individual experiencing loss of vision and to their families, advice and information on all aspects of vision loss as well as practical support and solutions to the challenges encountered by people with vision loss. Services are offered to people of all ages, from birth through to older age.

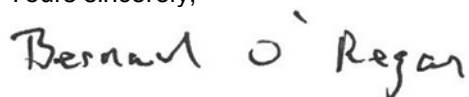
NCBI operates a Library and Media Centre that provides Braille production of books for visually impaired service users. Talking books and newspapers are also distributed to the national service users base and the library currently comprises 16,000 titles in a number of different formats.

NCBI also provide a range of services to public and private organisations to make sure that their services are accessible to people who are blind and vision impaired.

NCBI advises government departments, companies and individuals on how to make the built environment and services accessible to people with sight loss.

HSE Disability Services fund NCBI, 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. NCBI received funding of €6,698,031 in 2021 from the HSE.

Yours sincerely,



Bernard O'Regan
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations