

22nd September 2022

Deputy Thomas Pringle TD  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**RE: PQ 42312/22**

*To ask the Minister for Health the amount spent by the HSE in contracting debt collection agencies to pursue unpaid fees and charges from inpatient/day services from those attending hospitals managed by Dublin Midlands Hospital Group in each of the years 2017 to 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter*

Dear Deputy Pringle,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Patients who attend at public hospitals are, depending on their eligibility, and subject to certain exemptions, liable to statutory charges. These are levied under the provisions of the 1970 Health Act. The charges are €100 for an Emergency Department attendance and €80 for an overnight stay, the latter charge is capped at €800 in any 12 month period. The HSE has a statutory obligation to levy and collect these charges and Hospitals have the discretion to operate payment plans where appropriate.

Hospitals are required, under HSE National Financial Regulation, NFR 25, to refer any unpaid debt to a collection agency after a period of time from date of billing. Debt collection continues to be managed at a local hospital level. If any patient has difficulty paying a hospital bill the regulations allow for the hospital and the patient to agree an instalment arrangement. We would advise they contact their hospital directly to discuss this on a one to one basis.

The standard practice for debt collection is to issue reminders of outstanding debts to patients before referral to a debt collection agency. The quantity and frequency of these reminders varies between individual hospitals but generally debt collection agencies are not contacted until the debt in question has been outstanding for at least 6 weeks and no communication has been received from the patient or where no payment plan has been agreed between the patient and hospital.

Hospitals	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore	24,156	27,845	32,396	27,314	30,448
Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise	39,024	18,711	24,810	28,041	27,532
Naas General Hospital	12,267	13,176	13,561	16,451	15,214
Tallaght University Hospital	145,422	165,205	104,077	97,752	98,882
St James's Hospital	116,883	150,890	149,681	113,559	55,503

Please be advised the Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital have issued a reply directly to you on the 6th September 2022 in relation to to this PQ.

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

Yours Sincerely



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**Mr Trevor O' Callaghan**  
**Chief Executive Officer**