



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta
Clár Cúraim Pobail Feabhsaithe &
Conarthaí Príomhchúraim
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte

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**Deputy David Cullinane,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.**

16th August 2023

PQ35158/2-To ask the Minister for Health the cost of a standardised eye care scheme for under 8s with consistent subsidies across all CHOs, costed by standardising the top end benefits across all CHOs - David Cullinane.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

I refer to your parliamentary question, which was passed to the HSE for response.

The Primary Care Eye Services Review Group (PCESRG) Report was launched on 28th June 2017. The Report sets out the current service levels, service provision models and the consultation process undertaken with patients, advocates, ophthalmic staff and representative bodies. It also highlights the limitations of the current model of service delivery and sets out the way forward for a significant amount of eye services to be delivered in a Primary Care setting. The recommendations from the PCESRG Report also complement the Model of Care developed by the National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology.

As per the Primary Care Eye Service Review Group Report (2017) recommendation, it is acknowledged that a large proportion of the management of children could be provided by other eye care professionals (i.e. Optometrists).

The Health Act of 1970 makes provision for ophthalmic services to children who can get free eye tests and treatment under pre-school developmental checks. School health services also complete eye screening and refer children for free treatment to the local HSE service, which may be in Primary Care or the hospital.

Regarding reimbursement, the current Community Ophthalmic Service Scheme (COSS) contract does not cover optical examinations for children. Their examination must be conducted by an Ophthalmologist (Eye Doctor). This service is provided by Community Ophthalmic Physicians employed by the HSE; therefore, reimbursement of examinations is not provided by the PCRS. The COSS scheme does provide for dispensing spectacles and optical devices by optometrists and dispensing opticians prescribed by Ophthalmologists to children.



Therefore, there is a requirement to expand the Community Ophthalmic Service Scheme to enable optometrists to provide eye exams to children over 8 years across the country. There is a commitment to progress this work, and we have completed a proposal to transfer the care of children aged 8 to 12 years to the care of local private optometrists. The cost of including eye exams for those aged 8 to 12 in the COSS is estimated in the region of 1 million euro annually. However, the final figure will be dependent on the rate agreed for the eye exam, and work is ongoing to determine the actual cost.

I trust this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Crowley', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Geraldine Crowley,
Assistant National Director,
Enhanced Community Care Programme &
Primary Care Contracts**