



Oifig Ceannasaí Oibríochtaí,  
Oibríochtaí Pobail, Cúram Priomhúil

Seomra 243, Ospidéal Dr Steevens,  
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14<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Deputy Smith,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ 30859/23 – To ask the Minister for Health for a breakdown, by CHO of the provision of optometry services for all ages; what is and is not covered; the waiting times; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

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- Duncan Smith

Dear Deputy Smith,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 30859/23) which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

On 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 you provided further clarification that the question is in relation to services provided by private operators under contract with the HSE. Whilst the HSE reports monthly on waiting times for public health services to include Ophthalmology, we do not collate waiting list data specific to Optometry. Generally, this service is provided privately under contract to the HSE and waiting time data in this regard is not currently recorded.

Under section 67 of the Health Act 1970, the HSE provides or arranges for the provision of optical treatment and appliances without charge for adults with medical/health amendment act (HAA) cards. Sight testing, eye examinations, and optical appliances are provided by ophthalmologists, optometrists, and dispensing opticians through the Community Ophthalmic Services Scheme (COSS) every two years. The Department of Social Protection (DSP) runs the Optical Benefit Scheme based on PRSI contributions for those not qualifying for the HSE's free optical services.

Provision is made 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 treatment to the local HSE service, which may be in Primary Care or the hospital. Regarding reimbursement, the current 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.

For your convenience, I have attached a link below providing details on the current status of the services that are covered under the Community Ophthalmic Services Scheme (COSS). This also includes details on the agreements between the HSE and Ophthalmologists, Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians providing Community Eye Care Services to eligible patients.



<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/gmscontracts/optometrist-dispensing-optician-and-ophthalmologist-contracts/>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Seán McArt'.

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**Seán McArt**

General Manager Primary Care  
National Community Operations