



Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Airgeadais
Feidhmeannacht na
Seirbhíse Sláinte
Seomra 125, Ospidéal
Dr. Steevens
BÁC 8

Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Health Service Executive
Room 125, Dr Steevens
Hospital
Dublin 8

14th April 2023

Deputy David Cullinane TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re PQ 15592 23: *To ask the Minister for Health the level of outstanding inpatient charges owed to the health service and the number of patients this relates to; if there will be debt forgiveness for this following the abolition of inpatient charges; if he will continue to employ the use of debt collectors against these patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. Your PQ above has been referred to me for response.

Net inpatient debtor balances for HSE statutory acute services as at 31 December 2022 was €8.1m. Please note that these figures remain draft until completion of the year end audit.

The HSE policy and procedures for debt collection are covered by NFR B-2 (National Financial Regulations) which is available to view on the HSE website using the following link: [nfrb2.pdf \(hse.ie\)](#)

Patients who attend at public hospitals are, depending on their eligibility, and subject to certain exemptions, liable to statutory charges levied under the provisions of the 1970 Health Act. The charges are €100 for an Emergency Department attendance and, prior to its abolition announced by the Minister for Health, €80 for an Inpatient/Day Services charge, with the latter charge capped at €800 in a rolling 12 month period. The HSE has a statutory obligation to levy and collect these charges and Hospitals have the discretion to operate instalment payment plans where appropriate. Any debt incurred prior to the abolition of the statutory inpatient charge will be subject to the normal financial regulations.

Debt collection continues to be managed at a local hospital level. Hospitals are required, under NFR B-2, to refer an unpaid debt to a collection agency after a period of time from date of billing. 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. Hospital Groups are mindful in implementing these processes that patients may be experiencing stress and/or financial challenges and encourage patients who are having difficulties fulfilling their debt to make contact with the hospital to which the debt is owed in order to make alternative payment arrangements. If hospitals are made aware or become aware of such challenges, agreements may be reached between the patient and hospital on a case by case basis and debt collectors are not included in the process.

I regret to inform you that information on the number of patients with outstanding debts is neither centrally recorded nor readily available from the data systems.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah.anderson1@hse.ie or tel: 087 9423319.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Anderson

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