



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

**Office of the Head of Operations,**  
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25<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Deputy Mark Ward,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [mark.ward@oireachtas.ie](mailto:mark.ward@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Ward,

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: 39267/23**

*To ask the Minister for Health for a breakdown of funding provided to the National Council for the Blind Ireland, by year from 2018 to date; if there are plans to increase this funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**PQ: 39268/23**

*To ask the Minister for Health the funding streams that are available to the National Council for the Blind Ireland to further develop its eye clinic liaison officer service; if funding will be provided on a multiannual basis; if there are plans to increase funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

HSE Disability Services is allocated funding on an annual basis to provide a range of services throughout the country. Funding is spent in line with nationally agreed policy for disability services, whilst at the same time endeavouring to maximise value. Services include Residential and Respite Services, Day Services, PA and Home Support Services, and Therapeutic Supports.

The HSE works in partnership with organisations including Section 38, Section 39, Out of State and For Profit organisations to ensure the best level of service possible is provided to people with a disability, and their families, within the available resources. The majority of specialised disability provision (80%) is delivered through non-statutory sector service providers.

The HSE acknowledges the role and contribution of non-statutory agencies in the development and provision of health and personal social services and is committed to the development of effective working relationships as enacted by the Health Act 2004.



The HSE has over 1,045 Service Arrangements or Grant Aid Agreements with approximately 419 organisations providing a wide variety of disability services on behalf of the HSE. These Service Arrangements and Grant Aid Agreements are covered by a Governance Framework.

There is continuous engagement between the HSE, the Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) and these agencies to ensure resources are prioritised on the basis of meeting the needs of people with a disability and those caring for them within the allocated resources.

### **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.

HSE Disability Services has a high regard for NCBI and funds the agency, 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.

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NCBI has received the following funding through HSE Disability Services:

2018: € 6,578,509

2019: € 6,579,851

2020: € 6,701,230

2021: € 6,953,857

2022: € 7,547,086

2023 € 7,116,512 (so far in 2023 as funding may not be fully uploaded on SPG this year as yet)

(Please note:-The funding Information contained is from the SPG system is as at the date indicated, and represents the funding arrangement allocations entered by the operational system. SPG is not a finance or payment system and figures will fluctuate on a continuum as updates on governance arrangement are uploaded.)

Community Healthcare Area 9 (CHO 9) contributes the largest amount of funding at over 49% of the total allocated to NCBI.

### **Sight Loss Advisor Programme**

The NCBI's Sight Loss Advisor is based in an ophthalmology clinic and is there, at the point of diagnosis, to provide vital support and information to people who are facing a serious deterioration in their level of vision. NCBI conducted a pilot programme with the Mater Hospital Eye Clinic, which showed that having access to services available in the clinic improves patient experience, empowers patients, and enhances education and understanding of eye conditions for patients and their families. The Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) service now operates in Dublin in the Mater, Temple Street and the Eye and Ear hospitals. The aim of the ECLO is to provide timely support to patients at the point of, or as close to diagnosis as possible.



NCBI believes that its Sight Loss Advisor programme could provide a much-needed service to patients currently waiting for ophthalmic treatment in Ireland and wants to see funding prioritised for a national roll-out.

The Pilot Sight Loss Adviser Programme was not funded through Disability Services allocation, but through acute Hospital programme.

The 2023 HSE Service Plan sets out, at a high level, the anticipated service activity levels that are to be delivered during 2023 commensurate with the level of funding allocated to Disability Services.

The HSE recognises the value of NCBI's support and services to people experiencing sight loss. However, further increases in funding can only be considered within the parameters and scope of funding available to the HSE.

### **Estimates Process and Multi Annual Investment**

The Health Act 2004 Section 31 (1) and (2) states that within 21 days after the publication by Government of the Estimates for supply services for the financial year or such other period as the Minister may allow, the Executive shall: a) Prepare in accordance with this section, a service plan for the financial year or any other period as may be determined by the Minister, and b) Adopt the plan so prepared and submit it to the Minister for approval.

Each year, prior to the publication of next year's Service Plan and the allocation of funding commensurate with that plan, based on government direction and the economic environment, the HSE establishes a process and accountability route to identify financial and human resource requirements for the following year for the totality of the organisation.

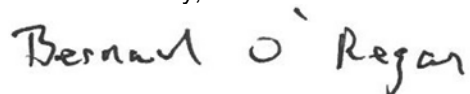
This typically includes: Existing Levels of Service, Service Priorities, Government Policy, Strategic Direction of HSE and service efficiencies / initiatives.

Each year the HSE participates in the Estimates Process with the Department of Health and makes a submission for additional monies to meet the health and social care needs of the population it services.

The Disability Service makes submissions for additional funding for Day, Residential, Respite, Home Support/PA hours, Multi Disciplinary Posts and Neuro Rehab monies as a key element of its submission. Funding for the National Council for the Blind Ireland to further develop the eye clinic is comprehended in HSE submissions for 2024.

The HSE makes every effort to secure multi-annual investment for services via the Estimates process and is very conscious of the need to deliver disability policy on a more sustainable footing given the significant levels of need for increased and more effective services and supports to enable people with a disability to live independent lives in their own community.

Yours Sincerely,



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

