



Access & Integration,
Room 138, Dr. Steevens' Hospital, Dublin 8.
D08 W2A8

14th October 2024

Mr Richard Bruton TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 35846 To ask the Minister for Health how the level of reimbursement is set for persons who are referred by medical practitioners for care outside Ireland for different procedures; and whether a schedule of permitted refunds is published.

Dear Deputy Bruton,

Thank you for your Parliamentary Question referenced above, which has been forwarded to me for direct reply.

Service users, in consultation with their treating clinician/s may opt to access the overseas treatment schemes for their healthcare requirements.

In general the Treatment abroad scheme (TAS) covers the cost of planned treatment in another country in the European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA), United Kingdom or Switzerland. The treatment must be within Irish law and either:

- not available in Ireland, or
- not available in the time normally necessary to get it in Ireland - taking into account your health and the likely course of your condition or disease

In general the Cross Border Directive (CBD) scheme which is based on the provisions of EU Directive 2011/24/EU allows public patients in Ireland, to access healthcare to which the patient would have been entitled to in Ireland, in another EU or EEA country. The patient pays upfront for the treatment and claims reimbursement from the HSE upon return subject to terms and conditions e.g. submission of documentation etc. The reimbursement which the home country makes to the patient is the cost of the treatment in the public healthcare sector in Ireland or the cost of the treatment abroad, whichever is the lesser. Public healthcare sector costs in Ireland are set out in Diagnostic Related Groups (DRGs) and the list of DRGs and associated costs are published on the HSE's CBD webpage.

In 2020, the UK exited the EU (Brexit). At that time the majority of patients using the CBD were accessing their healthcare in Northern Ireland. In recognition of the impact of the UK exit from the EU on patients who use the scheme, and in order to mitigate the loss of access to private healthcare providers in NI for persons resident in Ireland under the CBD scheme,

on the 28th December 2020 the Government approved the implementation of a new Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme (NIPHS).

The NIPHS which became operational from 1 January 2021 on an administrative basis, enables persons ordinarily resident in the State to access and be reimbursed for private healthcare in Northern Ireland by the HSE, provided such healthcare is publicly available within Ireland. In line with the provisions of the CBD, the NIPHS allows the HSE to reimburse the cost of the healthcare in private healthcare sector of Northern Ireland or the cost of the healthcare in the State by the HSE, whichever is the lesser. Again the cost of that care that would have been delivered by the HSE is determined by reference to the appropriate DRG cost.

Activity Based Funding (ABF) is the main mechanism by which funding is allocated to Irish acute public hospitals. ABF seeks to fund hospitals based on the number and mix of patients treated in those hospitals. Diagnosis Related Groups (DRGs) are the means by which patients are classified to allow like for like comparison of patient profiles between hospitals.

The Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO) within the HSE, using an Australian AR-DRG classification system, sets prices for all 795 DRGs based on the average cost of all public hospitals with activity in that DRG, using HIPE activity data and costing data. The price list is primarily used to determine the cost of activity in public hospitals. The HSE's Overseas Treatment Schemes office uses this HPO costing for the purpose of reimbursing service users for procedures done overseas and in Northern Ireland.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact the National Contact Point office on 056 77 84546.

Yours sincerely,



David Walsh
National Director