

Colm Burke TD  
Fine Gael  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**email:** colm.burke@oireachtas.ie

July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**PQ PQ33533/25:** To ask the Minister for Health for Health to clarify the options available to women who have cancer and require breast surgery as regards their access to support services including breast prostheses, and, in particular, whether they can attend any facility which is approved by the HSE regardless of where they are located; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Burke,

There are number of supports available for women diagnosed with breast cancer including:

**Community Cancer Support Centres:** are in most local communities and provide support services for cancer patients, their families and carers. They have a wide range of individual and group programmes and supports available including counselling and psychological support, manual lymphatic drainage for lymphoedema, physical activity programmes, survivorship programmes and complementary therapies.

**Some centres support the provision of wig and prosthesis services which are delivered by private suppliers and administered and funded by HSE primary and community care**

[communityfundschemes@hse.ie](mailto:communityfundschemes@hse.ie) . Patients can attend any facility but are encouraged to access services locally for convenience.

There are approximately 45 **Community Cancer Support Centres in the National Cancer Control Programme Alliance** with services throughout Ireland, all of whom provide professionally delivered services to cancer patients and their families free of charge. A list of the support centres in each area can be found using the following link: [www.hse.ie/thealliance](http://www.hse.ie/thealliance)

#### **Survivorship programmes relevant for breast cancer patients**

**Survivorship Programmes, including the Cancer Thriving and Surviving (CTS) Programme**, help patients with the transition from active treatment to living well with and beyond cancer. The programme includes sessions that address the recovery of self-confidence, adjustment to a changed self, and confidence to self-manage cancer-related problems and to promote recovery of well-being and successful transition to survivorship, following a cancer diagnosis. The National Cancer Control Programme provides training for the CTS programme and co-ordinates its implementation nationally.

The **LACES- Life and Cancer- Enhancing Survivorship workshop** is a workshop for patients at the end of treatment with modules on Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, Return to Work, Coping, Finances, Sexuality,

Self-Care and using community supports. This workshop is 2 and a half hours long and runs every week in person at cancer centres and on line for patients all over Ireland.

**CLIMB- Children's Lives Include Moments of Bravery-** is a support programme dedicated to support children coping with a parent's cancer diagnoses. It runs over 6 weeks using therapeutic art and play.

**Menopause and Cancer initiatives** including a newly published information pamphlet and the **EMPOWER programme**. This programme runs over 6 sessions and addresses how to manage menopause symptoms such as fatigue and brain fog, lifestyle, nutrition, the losses associated with menopause, intimacy and sexuality. Expert contributors address the physical, emotional and psychological symptoms of menopause induced by cancer treatment. Participants will also spend time with others with similar experiences for peer support.

**Psycho-oncology:**

Psycho-oncology multi-disciplinary specialist teams have been established in eight cancer centres (and St. Luke's Radiation Oncology Network) to identify, assess, manage and treat the psychological, social and medical needs of cancer patients. MDTs have Psychologists, Psychiatry, Social Workers and Clinical Nurse Specialists.

Psycho-oncology teams work with patients who have breast cancer and deliver sexual health education and services to both patients and groups of healthcare professionals.

Yours sincerely,

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Ms Louise Mullen  
National Lead for Cancer Survivorship, Psycho-oncology and Patient Engagement  
National Cancer Control Programme

CC: Nursing Team NCCP  
PaToDirector

