



30th March 2021

Deputy Thomas Gould, TD
Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

PQ: 14897/21

To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of establishing a needle exchange service.

PQ 14898/21

To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of staffing and running a needle exchange service.

Dear Deputy Gould,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above Parliamentary Questions which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. As there is overlap between the two questions, I propose to answer both questions in this response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

Needle Exchange provision is a core element of the Harm Reduction response to the problem of injecting drug use. This approach is endorsed by our National Drug and Alcohol Strategy: 'Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery' and action 2.2.28 within the strategy which states-Continue to expand Harm Reduction Initiatives focused on people who inject drugs.

Needle exchange services are evidence based interventions that can reduce the spread of blood borne viruses and engage difficult to reach populations with Addiction supports and programmes. The HSE provides Needle Exchange services through a number of innovative mechanisms including static sites and mobile services/backpacking. During the Covid 19 pandemic specific guidance was developed for services in relation to needle exchange provision

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/other-areas/health-inequalities/needle-exchange-provision-in-covid.pdf>

In relation to the costs of establishing, staffing and running a needle exchange service the following costs represent the costs for the different options. It should be noted that prior to establishment of any service there is always an identification of need and consultation process with relevant stakeholders. For safety and accountability, two workers are required to run a service.

Static Site: Establishing a small community based project

Staffing (including non-pay and PRSI)	2 x €47,000
Insurance (non HSE)	€8,000



Stock	€10,000
Total	€112,000

Mobile Service:

Staffing (including non-pay and PRSI)	2 x €47,000
Cost of Van (with inbuilt compartments)	€25,000 (once off)
Servicing/CVT	€1,200
Insurance/Tax (for HSE service)	Covered by state claims
Fuel	€2,600
Stock	€10,000
Total (year one)	€132,800

A 'Backpacking' service would require 2 staff at the above rate of €47,000 each with stock of €10,000 and insurance is dependent on whether the workers were HSE employees or not.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Eamon Keenan
National Clinical Lead – Addiction Services