



Ref: PQ 50625/23

12th February 2024

Deputy Louise O'Reilly
Dáil Eireann
Dublin 2

Dear Deputy O'Reilly

I refer to your below parliamentary question which has been forwarded to me for attention.

PQ 50625/23 – To ask the Minister for Health if he is aware of any supports in place for parents who have to accompany their children for an urgent medical procedure, such as an organ transplant procedure, to assist with costs of accommodation, food, transport, time off work and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Response:

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) can advise that there are no standardised supports for parents who must accompany their child for an urgent medical procedure abroad, e.g. for an organ transplant in the UK.

The Treatment Abroad Scheme covers medical care and transport, "where the patient is under the age of 18, the air or sea fares of two accompanying adults will also be provided, subject to available funding to two accompanying parents" (TAS National Transport Policy, 2022) however the money spent upfront by parents in these situations takes a number of weeks/months to be reimbursed.

The TAS E112 scheme does not include a provision for travel and or subsistence expenses for children or their parents travelling abroad to avail of approved treatments, except in the case of living kidney and liver donors (Policy on the Reimbursement of Expenses of Living Kidney and Liver Donors, Department of Health). In the case where a parent is the living-related donor, they are eligible, as per the policy, for reimbursement of reasonable travel and accommodation expenses (up to €6,000) incurred from when the donor has been selected as a potential donor through to the inpatient stay when the organ donation takes place and for up to 12 weeks post-donation, as well as loss of earnings incurred (with an upper limit of €10,000).

Medical Social Workers on hospital medical teams rely heavily on the generosity of general children's charities such as the Cliona's Foundation, Little Blue Heroes, Protestant Aid, and

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann



Children's Health Ireland

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the Sick & Indigent Roomkeepers Society, who provide some funding towards non-medical costs of care.

For children with specific diagnoses or who require a heart, liver, or kidney transplant, families can avail of limited funding from specific charities, for example, Heart Children Ireland, Children's Liver Disease Ireland, Irish Kidney Association etc. Children travelling abroad to the United Kingdom or Germany for oncology treatment can avail of funding from charities such as Aobheann's Pink Tie, the Gavin Glynn Foundation, Cancer Fund for Children, Irish Cancer Society and so on.

There are no specific funds available to support parents with transport or food costs whilst abroad, except for children eligible for a living-related donor liver or kidney transplant, therefore many parents rely on family generosity or apply for loans from credit facilities. Many of the UK hospitals require a donation (of approximately £10 towards hospital accommodation, which is in stark comparison to Irish children's hospitals, many of whom charge parents per night of accommodation).

A limited number of parents who meet a means-test may qualify for supplementary social welfare allowance however at such a time of their child requiring urgent treatment abroad, it is a challenge for parents having to fill in a significant amount of additional paperwork or present to their local social welfare office.

For parents who require time off work, the majority must take certified sick leave, or annual leave, as there are no provisions within the current leave schemes to allow parents paid time off if their child requires urgent medical care abroad.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Murphy', written in a cursive style.

Fiona Murphy
Deputy CEO/Operations Director
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Our **Mission** is to: Promote and provide child-centred, research-led and learning informed healthcare, to the highest standards of safety and excellence. We will do this in partnership with each other, with children, young people and their families through a network of children's services in Ireland.

CRA Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20202295 Revenue Charitable Status CHY: 22235

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