



# News In Brief

August 2017

## Information & Snippets

### **EUROPEAN CROSS-BORDER HEALTHCARE DIRECTIVE**

Groundbreaking EU legislation means that you have the right to receive medical treatment in another EU member state (including the North) and skip Irish waiting lists. The HSE must foot your bill under the European Cross-Border Healthcare Directive which was fully introduced in Ireland in February 2015.

#### **What does it Cover?**

Virtually all elective treatment with the exception of organ transplants. It includes everything from hip and heart operations to diagnostic scans. Psychiatric and addictive treatment is covered as well as orthodontic treatment and rehabilitation. Long term Nursing Home Care is **NOT COVERED**.

To reiterate, the European Cross-Border Healthcare Directive enshrines your right to travel overseas for care

#### **Do I have to be on a waiting list?**

No. According to the Department of Health "Referral for care under the Cross Border Directive" can be made by a GP, a hospital consultant and certain other HSE clinicians. What this means is that you can bypass the Irish System altogether and we understand thousands have already gone abroad and had their procedures.

#### **What is the catch?**

None apparently. There is one thing, however, you have to pay the bill upfront and wait for re-imburement by the HSE. Reports in newspapers tell us that credit unions are providing loans for such operations.

#### **What does the HSE pay?**

They must pay the cost of the treatment in Ireland or abroad, whichever is the cheaper. They promise to pay immediately on getting the bill. Reports suggest that there are very few countries where the treatment is more expensive than in Ireland. Within the governing EU Regulations and Irish legislation, the CBD provides for the cost of publicly funded healthcare in Ireland to be availed of in a EU/EEA member state and the costs to be reimbursed subject to compliance with the applicable administration processes adopted by the HSE in the administration of the CBD.

Patients must familiarize themselves with the administration requirements of the HSE prior to availing of cross border healthcare in order to confirm entitlement or otherwise to reimbursement of treatment costs.

#### **How can I find out about costs in other countries?**

The HSE have set up a National Office to deal with this called the **HSE National Contact Point Office, Cross-Border Healthcare Directive Department** which is based in Kilkenny. Prior authorisation is not needed. However, we recommend that it is good to contact and discuss your planned treatment with the National Contact Point Office before committing to anything. This is also important if you need in-patient treatment (overnight care) or more complex care.

HSE National Contact Point, Cross-Border Healthcare Directive Department, HSE Cross Border Directive, St Canice's Hospital, Dublin Road, Kilkenny Tel: 056 778 4546 Email: [crossborderdirective@hse.ie](mailto:crossborderdirective@hse.ie)

#### **Are the costs cheaper than Ireland?**

Apparently many are but there are a few exceptions which you should check. You could be out of pocket for a couple of weeks while you wait to be reimbursed which is a risk you take.

#### **For further information**

Phone 056 7784546.

Email: [crossborderdirectives@hse.ie](mailto:crossborderdirectives@hse.ie)

Website: [hse.ie/crossbor-directive](http://hse.ie/crossbor-directive)

#### **Citizens' Assembly**

The Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament attended the Citizens' Assembly in July in the Grand Hotel, Malahide, as the group of 99 citizens discussed Ireland's ageing population. With a wide variety of experts called upon to address the assembly, members were provided with a broad view of approaches to pension and long-term care for older people in Ireland. Speakers drew on international best practice and innovative methods of responding to both the demands and benefits of a population living longer and healthier lives.

The recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly in relation to increased investment and adequate regulation in homecare, a benchmarked fair State pension provision, the abolition of the Mandatory Retirement age, addressing the gender pension gap and improved access to education and pension arrangements for carers all indicate a clear understanding of the issues at hand.

### **CASHLESS BANKING / BOI CHANGES**

We are disappointed at the recent announcement by Bank of Ireland on the curtailment of services in up to 80% of their branches across the country within the next few months.

The needs of those older people who are reliant on over-the-counter transactions must be facilitated. It is important that Bank of Ireland seriously consider the impact of such changes on older and vulnerable people in the community.

While technological progress is to be welcomed, it is also essential that older people are not left behind.

Speaking with Shane Beatty on Kildare FM in June and Austin McCoy on Near FM in July, we called on the Bank of Ireland to reverse this decision until they can demonstrate how they will respond and cater for older people who do not wish to go cashless.

### **PSO LEVY INCREASE**

While gas and oil prices are dropping worldwide for suppliers, the price of energy for consumers continues to rise.

We are concerned at the continued increase in the **Public Service Obligation (PSO) Levy** on electricity bills. The PSO Levy appears on all domestic electricity bills and can usually be seen in the bill breakdown as a line under the Standing Charge and the quantity of units for which you are being charged. The PSO Levy assists in the funding of companies supplying renewable energy in Ireland (e.g. wind energy). While climate change and energy sustainability is a huge concern, the proposed increase of 40% for domestic energy users from October 2017 may not be affordable for all.

In light of this, we have called for the PSO Levy to be reviewed in our Pre-Budget Submission.

### **HOME SECURITY**

The Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament is alarmed at the number of violent attacks on older people in their homes across rural and urban communities throughout the country. The horrific incidents in Mayo and Bray, which took place in 2013 and 2016 respectively, which were reported on extensively in recent weeks, are a cause for concern. As we have done in previous years, we again call for a cross departmental group to be set up to examine ways by which homes can be made safer. We would also encourage people to take all possible safety

Precautions, including alarm system installations and door/window locking devices, to ensure a minimum level of protection.

### **WASTE CHARGES**

Recent increases in waste charges and plans to allow for the introduction of a pay-by-weight system for private waste operators in autumn 2017 are of concern to the Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament. The announced allocation of €75 to those with incontinence needs is very welcome. However, we feel that a pay-by-weight system will negatively impact upon many older people. While we are aware of the environmental benefits of the incentivisation of waste reduction, we would ask that adequate regulation on maximum waste collection pricing be introduced and that specific dispensations for those on lower incomes be allocated.

### **FLU**

As the summer draws to a close and chillier weather awaits us, it is essential to highlight the importance of the flu vaccination. With people over 65 considered an at-risk group in terms of the flu, it is vital that people are encouraged to minimise the possibility of contracting a virus. You can access the vaccine by contacting your GP or pharmacist, with the vaccine provided free of charge for all aged over 65. The consultation and vaccine are free for Medical Card or GP Visit Card holders. Those without a Medical Card or GP Visit Card will be charged a consultation fee.

### **MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

In June we appointed a Membership Development Officer, Fiona Dunkin. She comes to us with a social justice background and experience in the age-related sector. She looks forward to meeting and working with the members of the Parliament over the coming months.

### **RAFFLE 2017**

**Our Fund Raising Committee are busy organising our Raffle 2017. We hope all of you will support their effort to raise much needed funds for the Parliament.**

**Further copies of the "News in Brief" are available on request.**

*Don't forget our website [www.seniors.ie](http://www.seniors.ie) and email address [office@seniors.ie](mailto:office@seniors.ie) for any queries, comments and suggestions.*

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