



Budget 2026 submission to Government

Protecting Ireland's eye health and preventing avoidable sight loss

About us

FODO Ireland is the representative body for community eye care providers in Ireland. The Association exists to be the collective voice of members and to represent them at national level to ensure they can deliver accessible, high-quality, patient-focused eye care to people of all ages and means in their local communities.

FODO Ireland membership includes, amongst others, Specsavers, Vision Express, Optical Express and the Hakim Group of independent practices. As a collective, FODO Ireland members deliver over 65% of all eye examinations and employ the majority of CORU registered and ancillary staff.

Summary

FODO Ireland members deliver eye care services under both the Department of Health and HSE's Community Ophthalmic Services Scheme (COSS) and the Department of Social Protection's PRSI Treatment Benefit Scheme (TBS).

We are calling for the restoration of sight test fees, as previously committed by the Department of Health, including an uplift in line with inflation and full reversal of cuts made under FEMPIⁱ. This is long overdue and will help us enable the government to deliver on its own promises and priorities, including the expansion of eye care services for children.

A new government and new budget present a great opportunity to refresh and improve healthcare. By reinstating fair fees, the government will enable the strong network of community optometrists to do more to protect public health, particularly in early detection and preventative care.

Community optometry is the bedrock of Ireland's eye health system, providing timely, cost-effective, and high-quality care across the country. However, there is now increased demand for services, and the government has not yet delivered on its own commitments to the sector by fairly funding COSS and TBS.

With the right budgetary support, we can protect eye health, improve patient outcomes and reduce the long-term costs to the State of avoidable blindness.

Detail

TBS fees

Fees under the TBS have not increased since October 2017, over which time staffing and business costs have increased considerably.

Had fees uplifted in line with inflation, the eye examination fee would now be €37.22. This is still well below the estimated cost of providing an eye examination, which we estimate to be more than €55 per episode.

The previous Minister for Social Protection made a commitment to reviewing the fees in May 2024ⁱⁱ. We believe it would be reasonable and affordable for the Government to uplift the TBS eye examination fee to €40 this year, and other fees and benefits at a similar rate in line with inflation since October 2017ⁱⁱⁱ.

COSS fees

The COSS contract requires eye examination fees to match the eye examination fees for the TBS scheme, which makes sense given the examinations are the same. However, this has not been the case since 2017, and while former Health Minister Stephen Donnelly made a commitment to increase fees and to ensure parity with the two fees, we still await confirmation of when this correction will be made^{iv}.

Therefore, standard eye examination fees under the COSS contract should be increased to €40 this year and we also seek financial correction of the historic difference in fees between COSS and TBS since 2017.

Eye care for over 8s

A top priority in health outcomes terms is to urgently tackle delays young children face when trying to access eye care. Currently, there is no State scheme in place to cover routine eye examinations for children aged 8 to 11, and only over 12s are covered, if they or their dependents qualify for a full medical card.

These delays have an impact on education and training, which can have lifelong negative consequences. A national scheme to provide eye care to children between the ages of 8 and 18, initially announced in 2017, now needs to be rolled out nationally with more speed to help thousands of young children receive treatment before it is too late for them. The Government has already committed to addressing child poverty and the inequality it creates in the Programme for Government, and it must now act decisively to uphold that commitment.

ⁱ [PQ Response to Catherine Connolly TD](#) (Independent), 23 July 2024
[PQ Response to Marian Harkin TD](#) (Independent), 23 July 2024
[PQ Response to Mattie McGrath TD](#) (Independent), 9 July 2024
[PQ Response to Alan Dillon TD](#) (Fine Gael), 2 July 2024
[PQ Response to Marc MacSharry TD](#) (Independent), 11 June 2024
[PQ Response to Michael Creed TD](#) (Fine Gael), 11 June 2024
[PQ Response to Steven Matthews TD](#) (Green Party), 28 May 2024
[PQ Response to Josepha Madigan TD](#) (Fine Gael), 28 May 2024
[PQ Response to Marc Ó Cathasaigh TD](#) (Green Party), 21 May 2024
[PQ Response to Seán Canney TD](#) (Independent), 16 May 2024
[PQ Response to Jennifer Murnane O'Connor TD](#) (Fianna Fáil), 14 May 2024
[PQ Response to Claire Kerrane TD](#) (Sinn Féin), 14 May 2024
[PQ Response to Jim O'Callaghan TD](#) (Fianna Fáil), 23 April 2024
[PQ Response to Colm Burke TD](#) (Fine Gael), 7 March 2024
[PQ Response to Colm Burke TD](#) (Fine Gael), 24 October 2023
[PQ Response to Colm Burke TD](#) (Fine Gael), 26 September 2023

ⁱⁱ [PQ Response to Seán Canney TD](#) (Independent), 16 May 2024
[PQ Response to Colm Burke TD](#) (Fine Gael), 26 September 2023

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://visual.cso.ie/?body=entity/cpicalculator>

^{iv} [PQ Response to Catherine Connolly TD](#) (Independent), 23 July 2024
[PQ Response to Marian Harkin TD](#) (Independent), 23 July 2024
[PQ Response to Alan Dillon TD](#) (Fine Gael), 2 July 2024
[PQ Response to Marc MacSharry TD](#) (Independent), 11 June 2024
[PQ Response to Jim O'Callaghan TD](#) (Fianna Fáil), 23 April 2024
[PQ Response to Colm Burke TD](#) (Fine Gael), 7 March 2024
[PQ Response to Colm Burke TD](#) (Fine Gael), 24 October 2023