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[REDACTED]

19 February 2015

Information Note – Access to Medical Services

Re: Ex gratia scheme for the benefit of those who were admitted to and worked in the Magdalen Laundries and St Mary's Training Centre Stanhope Street and House of Mercy Training School, Summerhill, Wexford.

Dear Ms [REDACTED]

I refer to your participation in this Scheme. Minister Frances Fitzgerald, who in consultation with Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan, decided that it would be beneficial and helpful to provide you with an update on the situation with regard to the provision of the enhanced medical card as there has been some misinformation concerning the issue in the media.

As you know, Judge Quirke specifically recommended that legislation should be introduced to give effect to his recommendation regarding the provision of medical services. While this is a Health issue, the Government agreed that the Department of Justice would coordinate legislation to implement several of Judge Quirke's recommendations.

Minister Fitzgerald and the Government are committed to fully implementing all of the recommendations made by Judge Quirke.

I am pleased to inform you that the draft legislation was passed by Dáil Eireann on the 18th February. However, as with all new legislation, it will now have to be discussed and passed by the Seanad and then signed by the President before it becomes law. It is expected that this process should be finalised in the coming weeks.

There was some confusion over the difference between this enhanced medical card and the HAA card which is given to people who were infected with Hepatitis C. As you will appreciate, those women infected with Hepatitis C will have very specific treatment needs which will not be relevant to you. Judge Quirke recognised this and stated in Appendix G of his report that a suitable guide for services should be adapted to meet the needs of the women who were in the 12 specified institutions.

I want to take this opportunity to assure you that the services being provided are precisely those that were recommended by Judge Quirke. The Bill makes provisions for a broad range of health services which you will receive free of charge. These services will include:

- General Practitioner, medical and surgical services
- Drugs, medicines and surgical appliances
- Nursing services
- Home help services
- Dental, ophthalmic and aural services
- Counselling services
- Chiropody Services
- Physiotherapy services.

You will also be exempt from charges for acute in-patient services in hospitals.

The approach under the Scheme will be GP centred so you will be able to stay with your own doctor or change if you so wish.

There has also been some discussion on the issue of complimentary therapies such as massage and acupuncture. Judge Quirke did not comment one way or another on these therapies. The Minister for Health has reservations about such therapies being funded through the health service. Minister Fitzgerald, on a personal level, is more open to the benefits such therapies could bring to people and she will be considering options on how limited funding could be provided for such therapies. This would be done on an administrative basis and would not be in the legislation. We will provide further detail on this when all of the options have been considered.


For those living abroad, I can advise that the HSE will be dealing on an administrative basis with arrangements for equivalent health services to be provided in your country of residence.

The legislation also provides that payments which have been made by the State to you under this Scheme will be exempt from any financial assessment of means under the Fair Deal (Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009). This provision relates to applicants who are residing in Ireland.

We will be in touch with you again when the legislation has been passed by the Seanad and signed by the President. At that stage we will also provide you with contact details for the HSE as they will be putting the required procedures in place.

If you have any general queries in this regard please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Joni Murphy
The Restorative Justice Implementation Unit
Department of Justice and Equality

