

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

12/05/2017 - 19/05/2017



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly was dissolved at 00:01 on Thursday 26 January 2017.



Tuesday 16 May 2017

Department of Health

Hospital Services

Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health if persons resident here have access to other services other than dental services, ophthalmology services, ENT services and renal treatment at Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry, County Down; his views on cross-Border health care activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [

Simon Harris: I and my Department are committed to expanding provision of Cross-Border and All-Island initiatives for the benefit of patients in both jurisdictions. My Department continues to work with the Department of Health in Northern Ireland in this regard.

Three initiatives are currently operational. The All Island CHD Network was officially launched in 2016, will be progressed in phases over approximately five years and will be fully implemented by 2020. This service provides emergency surgery to babies born with CHD on an all island basis. The transfer of urgent NI cases to OLCHC has commenced, while NI elective cases are scheduled to be transferred at the end of 2018.

Activity from January to the end of December 2016 is as follows:

- 607 Cardiac Catheterisation procedures (546 RoI / 62 NI);
- 423 cardiac surgical patients (415 RoI / 8 NI).

The new North West Cancer Centre at Altnagelvin Area Hospital opened in November 2016 and offers radiotherapy services to patients from County Donegal, reducing their travel time significantly. A total of 20 patients from County Donegal have been referred to the service to date (as of May 5th, 2017). The service initially offered radiation therapy to patients with prostate cancer. Radiation therapy for patients with breast cancer has also now begun, with other cancer types coming on stream on a phased basis over the coming months.

Since late May 2016, all patients with ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI; in other words, a heart attack) from County Donegal are now transferred to Altnagelvin. From May 2016 to the end of February 2017, 28 patients from County Donegal with a diagnosed ST-Elevation myocardial infarction (heart attack) have been transferred to the Altnagelvin catheterisation laboratory and have received pPCI treatment.

In addition to the substantive projects outlined above, Letterkenny University Hospital (LUH) also contracts a range of additional services from Altnagelvin on a cross border basis, meaning that patients can be treated much closer to home.

I and my Department are in regular contact with our counterparts in Northern Ireland regarding the implementation of Cross Border services for patients.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-05-16a.923&s=cross-border+2017-05-12..2017-05-19#g924.q>

Tuesday 16 May 2017

Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Brexit Issues

Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to assist companies that are very heavily dependent on Northern Ireland and Britain as their export market in view of the particular difficulties arising due to Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Mary Mitchell O'Connor: My Department's agencies are actively supporting companies to prepare for Brexit.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) is in regular contact with some 600 clients who are most reliant on the UK market. A key focus is to support companies in sustaining and growing exports to the UK while also supporting diversification into new markets.

The EI #PrepareforBrexit communications campaign featuring the 'Brexit SME Scorecard' was launched in March. The Scorecard is an interactive online platform which can be used by all Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit.

EI has introduced a 'Be Prepared Grant' which offers up to €5,000 for exporting client companies to conduct further research and use external expertise to develop a Brexit Action Plan. On May 3rd, EI commenced a Brexit Regional Roadshow to raise further awareness of the potential impact of Brexit and encourage companies to start preparations now.

The Local Enterprise Offices Brexit-focus include a National Lean for Micro Initiative to improve competitiveness; mentoring and training initiatives; and awareness raising including workshops and cross-border business networking.

InterTrade Ireland is also undertaking initiatives for SMEs trading across the border including the provision of advice and supports for capability building.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-05-16a.104&s=cross-border+2017-05-12..2017-05-19#g110.r>

Tuesday 16 May 2017

Departmental Funding

Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to the fact that InterTrade Ireland is chronically underfunded; and the reason she is not providing it with substantially more funding and resources to cope with Brexit

Mary Mitchell O'Connor: Funding of InterTrade Ireland, ITI, is provided on a 2:1 basis by my Department and its counterpart in Northern Ireland, respectively. Discussions between both Departments to finalise the body's budget for 2017 have not yet been concluded, largely because the level of funding cannot be formally agreed until an Executive is in place in Northern Ireland. Those discussions, once completed, will determine the overall budget for the remainder of this year, and we are focused on reaching the outcome that equips the body with the financial resources it requires.

Having visited ITI's offices recently and met its management team in March, I am very much aware of the important role it has in helping SMEs address the commercial challenges associated with Brexit. That is why I have made additional financial resources available to ITI to supplement its main annual budgetary allocation. This will bring its total allocation from my Department in 2017 to €7.9 million. Last year, for example, my Department funded a study, which will be published shortly, examining some of the tariff-related impacts Brexit may have on cross-Border trade. Further financial support, of €250,000, was allocated to allow it to undertake a series of new practical Brexit-related initiatives. We will keep the financial requirements of ITI under review throughout 2017.

Maurice Quinlivan: I am glad the Minister has acted on this issue. I highlighted it for her last week. I appreciate her initiative with ITI. I appreciate the work she has done to date and I do not want to criticise that; I am just concerned that businesses North and South have yet to realise the potential impact of Brexit. We need to make sure ITI is fully resourced to provide SMEs with the awareness and assistance they will need.

Recent ITI figures released yesterday in a press release by the Minister show that 98% of businesses surveyed in the North and South have no plan in place to deal with the consequences of Brexit. Therefore, the area clearly needs additional resources. In the Oireachtas last week, Mr. Michel Barnier said:

Customs controls are part of EU border management. They protect the Single Market, as well as our food safety and standards.

That implies a Border. How hard the Border will be remains to be seen.

Mary Mitchell O'Connor: I understand how important it is that ITI have a sound and strong financial footing. It is especially the case given the important role it will play in helping SMEs address the challenges that Brexit will present. That is why I have made additional funding available. I will keep its requirements under review. We must remember, however, that North-South bodies are funded on a joint basis by the authorities in both jurisdictions. Two thirds of the costs are supplied by this Government, and the remaining third is set by Northern Ireland. We are, therefore, precluded from simply increasing the main budgetary allocation unless corresponding additional financial resources are provided by the authorities in the North. That is the case for all North-South bodies, not just ITI. We have made it clear to the authorities in the North how much we value the work ITI undertakes. We are working with them on an ongoing basis to ensure the body will have the capacity and resources it needs to help businesses on both sides of the Border.

Maurice Quinlivan: I do not necessarily agree with the Minister when she says we cannot increase expenditure down here without waiting for the North on certain issues. I am glad, however, she is taking such an interest in cross-Border trade. I hope the research project undertaken by the ESRI and ITI will be published shortly to allow for a detailed examination of trade across the island and the impact Brexit could have. If we do not achieve special status designation for the North, we will face a very difficult set of circumstances. Can the Minister give us any update on the progress of the study and state when she hopes it will be published?

Mary Mitchell O'Connor: This study will be published very soon. As the Deputy knows, it is a study on the consequences of the application of tariffs on trade over and back across the Border. We will be publishing it very soon.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/debates/?id=2017-05-16a.278&s=cross-border+2017-05-12..2017-05-19#g281>