

COVID SEES DROP IN HEALTH INSURANCE CLAIMS BUT PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WITH INSURANCE CONTINUES TO RISE ACCORDING TO THE HIA

- **2.3 million people in Ireland now have private health insurance**
- **Covid restrictions cause 27% drop in overall level of claims**
- **March sees day case treatment claims rebound to close to pre covid levels**
- **Insurance companies refund €415 million to customers to compensate for reduction in access to private health facilities**

XX May 2021: 46.4% of the Irish population now have private health insurance according to new figures released by the Health Insurance Authority (HIA). In the 12 months from April 2020 to March 2021, almost 38,000 additional people took out a private health insurance policy. This represents a 1.6% increase compared to the previous 12 months. However, due to the restrictions imposed in response to the COVID 19 pandemic, the overall level of hospital claims paid by insurers declined by 27% in the same period. Claims for nights spent in hospital declined from 1,108,208 in the 12 months to March 2020 to 804,067 in the 12 months to March 2021, a decline of 27%.

The number of claims for day-case treatments also declined from 616,460 in the 12 months to end March 2020 to 442,659 in the 12 months to end March 2021. This was a decline of 28%.

Laura Brien, Chief Executive of the HIA commented:

“The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic was clearly visible on the market with a steep reduction in claims. However, we see some elements beginning to return to normal again as, the number of day-case treatments has almost rebounded to pre-COVID levels in the first quarter of this year. The monthly average claims in the three months to March 2021 was approximately 44,000 per month. This compared to a monthly average of approximately 52,000 in the three months to March 2020. In contrast, the number of claims relating to nights spent in hospital remain below their pre-COVID level. Demand for health insurance remains strong and that there has been an increase in the numbers who have health insurance. This is in spite of the impact of Covid-19 on the economy and employment levels.”

The monthly average treatment nights claimed for in the three months to March 2021 was 69,181. This compares to a monthly average of just over 89,000 nights in the corresponding 3 months of 2020. This decline of 22% came at a time when the HSE contracted for access to the private hospitals in response to the surge in COVID cases. The three insurance companies paid combined refunds to their customers amounting to approximately €415m, to compensate for the reduction in access to private health facilities in 2020. This represented about 15% of premium income received by insurers in 2020.

All three of the open market insurers have raised their prices in the last few months, and this has led to an increase in premiums as customers renewed policies at the start of 2021. The HIA continues to encourage customers to shop around for the health insurance policies that best meet their needs. The average premium paid per insured person (including children) was 4% higher in Q1 2021 compared to Q1 2020.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

About the Health Insurance Authority (HIA)

The role of the HIA is to ensure consumers are aware of their rights and insurers know their responsibilities in relation to health insurance in Ireland. The HIA regulates the health insurance market under the Health Insurance Acts, by collecting and analysing market information, ensuring compliance with the Acts and enabling the health insurance market to work effectively for the benefit of consumers, providers, policy makers and other stakeholders.