

2.126 million people held in-patient health insurance plans at the end of March 2016

- **2.2% reduction in average 2015 health insurance premiums**
- **45.9% of the population held in-patient health insurance plans at the end of March**
- **Health Insurance Authority publishes May 2016 edition of its health insurance market newsletter**

Thursday 19 May, 2016: The Health Insurance Authority has published the May 2016 edition of its health insurance newsletter which provides the latest data on the numbers holding in-patient health insurance plans. At the end of March 2016, 2.126 million people held in-patient health insurance plans. This was an increase of approximately 4,000 on the number insured at the end of December 2015, and an increase of approximately 95,000 on the number insured at the end of March 2015. Average premium levels fell by 2.2% in 2015 from €1,200 per person in 2014 to €1,173 per person in 2015. Total health insurance premiums paid in 2015, gross of tax relief, amounted to €2.462billion, which was an increase of 0.5% from 2014.

The introduction of Lifetime Community Rating (LCR) from 1 May 2015 saw a sharp increase in the total numbers insured during the quarter to June 2015. There has been some levelling off in the rate of increase in the total number insured since then. LCR introduced an age-related loading on premiums of 2% for each year of age over 34 years for individuals taking out private health insurance for the first time.

Based on CSO population estimates, approximately 45.9% of the population held private health insurance at the end of March 2016. At its peak in 2008, approximately 50.9% of the population held private health insurance.

Total claims paid in 2015 by the four open market insurers amounted to €1.979billion. This compares to claim payments of €1.81billion in 2014, an increase of 9%. The May 2016 newsletter also includes a graph of average claims per insured person by age in 2015.

Commenting, Health Insurance Authority CEO, **Don Gallagher**, said: *“The recovery in the total numbers of insured persons is continuing undoubtedly assisted by the introduction of Lifetime Community Rating, a reduction in average premium levels in 2015 and the general recovery in the economy and household incomes.*”

The private health insurance market remains as dynamic as ever with insurers competing and introducing new products at a range of price levels and cover options. There is value to be had but consumers need to actively consider what cover they want and be prepared to switch insurers to get cover at the right price. The HIA website at www.hia.ie has details of every health insurance product on the market and a useful comparison tool to compare products from different providers.”

Mr. Gallagher added: *“If someone hasn’t looked at their health insurance plan in the last two to three years, they may not be getting the best value available in the market for the level of cover they want. To get value, you do need to shop around.”*

The May 2016 Newsletter from the Health Insurance Authority is available at <http://www.hia.ie/news/newsletters>.