

STATES OF JERSEY



G.P. FEES AND INCOME SUPPORT (P.81/2020): AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 7th July 2020
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PAGE #, PARAGRAPH (a) –

In the preamble to paragraph (a), for the words “to review his recent decisions on the level of co-payments to be charged to various groups of patients for the delivery of primary care, and” substitute the words “to take such steps as are necessary, for implementation between the cessation of the current agreement between the Department of Health and Community Services and the Island’s G.P.s and the commencement of a scheme on 1st January 2021 in accordance with the States Assembly’s adoption of ‘Affordable access to Primary Care Scheme’ (P.125/2019) on 4th February 2020,”.

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

Note: After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Minister for Health and Social Services in consultation with the Minister for Social Security and the Council of Ministers, as appropriate, to take such steps as are necessary, for implementation between the cessation of the current agreement between the Department of Health and Community Services and the Island’s G.P.s and the commencement of a scheme on 1st January 2021 in accordance with the States Assembly’s adoption of ‘Affordable access to Primary Care Scheme’ (P.125/2019) on 4th February 2020, to –

- (a) add to the list of those eligible for free primary health care through G.P. consultations, members of households in receipt of Income Support; and
- (b) identify and bring forward for approval by the Assembly an appropriate source of funding for the foregoing.

REPORT

[P.125/2019](#), as amended, was approved by the States in early February, requested the Minister for Health and Social Services to –

“devise a scheme which improves access to primary care by reducing financial barriers for patients who are financially, clinically or socially vulnerable”.

In response to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Minister devised a different scheme which reduced the cost of G.P. consultations for all patients, rich and poor alike, and made Covid-19 consultations, along with some other services, free.

As part of this scheme, the consultation fee for children and young people between the age of 4 and 17 was set at £10. This level of fee, whilst welcome when compared to the Previous level of £40, still has problems associated with it. As the Children’s Commissioner points out –

“Any fees to access health care services present barriers to children and young people from accessing their right”

This arrangement for the delivery of primary care was to last for 4 months. This period of time is up on August 9th. As from August 10th the delivery and costs of primary care revert to the pre-Covid-19 levels. The cost the patient co-payments for a G.P. consultation, including children and young people, will once more be between £40 and £45 For the 5-month period until the Minister can negotiate a scheme which meets the criteria set in P.125/2019.

For these 5 months (and who knows, maybe longer) we shall be in a position where our primary care system is unaffordable to many and inaccessible to many young people who may be in dire need of G.P. services to address their mental health needs after these months of stress and worry.

Where some who are ill may put off that visit to the doctor until they are so ill that they need far more expensive hospital treatment. For many, the recent times have seen largely struggle and debt as jobs and hours have been lost and family incomes reduced. The last thing we should be doing is to add the stress of high doctor’s bills to the anxiety many are suffering as they try to make ends meet in these times of hardship.

Financial and manpower implications

The financial implications of adopting this amendment are approximately £1.1 million.