

2019.11.12

8 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding a reduction in the co-payment for patients for G.P. consultations: (OQ.282/2019)

What target date, if any, does the Minister have for a reduction in the co-payment for patients at G.P. consultations? What mechanism will the Minister use to achieve this?

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

This question covers similar ground to the written question posed by the Deputy this week, number 505 and I would refer Members to that answer. At present, I do not envisage proposing an across the board reduction in co-payment that would benefit rich and poor alike in this Island. I would reiterate, though, that there is an urgent need for action to reaffirm and redesign the role of the G.P. within the overall health system. This work, as I said in answer to an earlier question, is currently underway as part of our development of the Jersey Care model. Following that detailed financial analysis, plans will be drawn up next year to address financial barriers faced by patients who require G.P. consultations. Where fees might be retained in the new system, plans will be drawn up as part of the overall implementation to support low income groups with the costs of doctors' appointments.

3.8.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will anybody see any reduction in 2020 in the size of the bill that they receive for G.P. consultations, or other services from G.P.s?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

That workstream the Government has committed to within the Government Plan to undertake next year and its precise implementation will need to be a matter for that work.

3.8.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The question remains: what target date does he have for delivery of any reduction in the size of the payment for seeing a G.P.? What groups will he intend to target? He said it is not going to be blanket across the board, but does he agree with my estimate of something like a third of people who would benefit, either on clinical, medical, or social grounds, or economic grounds, from free treatment, or reduced fees, significantly reduced fees in the system? When will we see that?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The Deputy is trying to get us to run before we can trot. We are doing more than walking. We are planning the review and the economic analysis. The Government Plan commits Government to working during 2020 to bring forward proposals for addressing the vulnerable in the Island. Meanwhile, the Deputy has put forward an Amendment to the Government Plan, which proposes that large numbers of people will have a significant reduction in the co-payment for their G.P.s, including all persons over the age of 65, regardless of their wealth. I think that would be a poor use of public funds. There are many people over 65 ...

The Bailiff:

That will be a debate in 2 weeks' time as to whether the Deputy's Amendment will be accepted.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Indeed, Sir. The Deputy has asked me if I agreed with his figure of one-third of people in the Island receiving further benefit. I think he has drawn the net far too wide and too prematurely in bringing his Amendment.