

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 17th MAY 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 24th MAY 2021**

Question

Will the Minister advise –

- (a) what consideration, if any, has been given to the extension of the subsidy for General Practitioner (G.P.) consultations to those with high demand for G.P. services (i.e. those with multiple morbidities or those who have social needs such as age considerations) and if none, why; and
- (b) how the current fee structure for G.P. services is met from the levels of awards for clinical, personal, and mobility components in Income Support?

Answer

Last December a new Health Access Scheme was launched to significantly reduce the cost of a consultation for families with a low income who are in receipt of Income Support and older people in receipt of Pension Plus benefit. Surgery consultations are free for children (aged 16 years and under) within these households and adults pay £12 for a GP consultation or £9 for a nurse consultation. Some additional services, such as blood tests, are included in the fee, making it easier for people with a low income to budget for care costs.

The Health Access Scheme provides an additional subsidy on top of the subsidy of £20.28 which is payable in respect of all GP consultations across the whole population.

Around 12,000 people are eligible for the Health Access Scheme – and in any one month around a quarter to a third of all scheme members make at least one claim. The scheme has significantly reduced the cost of GP services for lower income people who have multiple morbidities or have extra needs based on their age.

The new service is due to be reviewed in November of this year, with input from General Practice, at which time options for development and expansion will be considered. The cost of the Health Access Scheme is met by the Health Insurance Fund. The annual cost is estimated to be £1.75 million, representing a significant investment into primary care services from public funds. Any extension of the Health Access Scheme would need to identify further funding.

Prior to the introduction of the Health Access Scheme, the value of the basic individual Income Support component (adult/child) was calculated to include funding for around 4 GP consultations per person per year. The Income Support scheme also includes additional components for people who need regular GP visits. These clinical cost components are awarded at two levels which pays an extra £182 or £364 annually on top of the standard Income Support award.

While the introduction of the Health Access Scheme has reduced the cost of general practice services to Income support families, the level of basic components and clinical cost components has been maintained.