

Provision and Cost of Primary Healthcare for Children

Thank you for asking us for our views with regards to the provision and cost of Primary Healthcare for children.

Due to the short time in which you have asked for a response, we have been unable to canvass the views of our members. The views below are of the Primary Care Body Board but any more considered response would require consultation with the membership.

Whilst General Practice provides the majority of medical care to this group of patients, care is also provided by health visitors, school nurses, dentists, pharmacists, physiotherapists and other allied healthcare professionals.

The Primary Care workforce needs to be resilient enough to offer appointments in a timely manner in order to be responsive to patients' needs.

We will focus our response on General Practice.

What, if anything, could improve children and young persons access to primary healthcare in Jersey?

Practices continue to offer both face to face and remote consultations to this group. The needs of this group vary hugely from managing acute illness to supporting older children and younger adults with a wide variety of physical and psychological problems whilst being mindful of the safeguarding issues in caring for this group.

Not only must General Practice be well supported by other community providers and secondary care, but children, young adults, their parents or responsible adults need to be aware as to how they can access consultations.

Patients and their carers need to be reassured that they are appropriately supported by government to ensure that cost is not a barrier.

This principle is true for all patient groups and we have consistently asked for increased funding as part of a wider review.

Consultation Fees

As independent practices we are governed by the Competition Regulatory Authority which prohibits any collusion in setting fees. Legally, we are not permitted to institute island wide fees

Practices therefore set fees according to their own business plans. This also allows patients, their families and responsible adults to make choices which reflect cost but, more importantly, value and service provision.

Whilst many practices do offer reduced rates for children, this is done to support families and in an effort to reduce any reluctance to seek appropriate healthcare. It should be

remembered that although the fee may be reduced, the cost of providing any consultation remains the same as providing this service to other patients.

A couple of practices did try waiving fees for children but this proved unsustainable. It should not be the responsibility of private businesses to make up for a lack of state support.

Although we support any government initiative to reduce cost to this patient group, it needs to be considered in the context of the funding of General Practice and wider Primary Care.

Without significant reassurances that practices will not be financially disadvantaged at the current time or at any point in the future, they are unlikely to agree to any universal fee as not only does it not allow practices to make independent decisions to ensure their ongoing viability, but it also has the possible unintended consequence of raising fees for other patient groups to make up for any shortfall.

We would welcome discussion on any initiative that reduced patient fees through increased government support to patients and their families.