

**REPLY BY THE MINISTER OF
THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
TO A QUESTION ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 6 OF THE
RULES OF PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY A. H. ADAM**

Question 1

Is the Board of HSSD concerned about the potential cost of drug or operative treatment that may occur for new residents within a short time of arrival on Guernsey?

Answer 1

To date, the Health and Social Services Department has not been aware of any particular reason to be concerned about the potential cost of drugs or treatments for new arrivals, and has not been actively monitoring or reviewing this issue. If the Department receives evidence of a problem in this area, it would be willing to consider it further.

Question 2

Is the Board of HSSD, in conjunction with SSD, going to consider exemptions to free medical treatment for the first 6 or 12 months of residency, as I believe applies in Jersey?

Answer 2

The Jersey Health and Social Services Department has a policy on “Provision of hospital treatment to residents, non-residents, overseas visitors and foreign nationals”, which stipulates that people may only receive free non-emergency hospital treatment if either:

- a) They are ordinarily resident in Jersey and in “J-category” [essential] employment; or
- b) They are ordinarily resident in Jersey, have been so for the past six months, and have been in employment and/or paying income tax throughout those six months; or
- c) They are ordinarily resident in Jersey and have been so for the past 12 months.

Emergency treatment provided by Jersey HSSD is free to all. Jersey’s policy does not extend to treatment provided or funded by the Jersey Social Security Department.

The States of Guernsey, acting through the HSSD and the Social Security Department, provides medical treatment free at the point of delivery, in the main through the contract with the Medical Specialist Group for specialist medical services and through supplementary benefit assistance for General Practice medical cover. In addition, HSSD finances the hospital services which support the MSG treatment, as well as off-island medical treatment.

Entitlement to specialist medical services from the MSG, which is financed from social security contributions, requires a new resident only to be registered with the Social Security Department and either paying contributions or exempted by reason of low income.

The Social Security Department has confirmed that there are no plans to amend the conditions of entitlement to specialist medical services, or to prescription drugs, which are

subject to the same eligibility rules. The Department notes that the scheme started with a qualifying period of 13 weeks residence in Guernsey or Alderney before becoming eligible for benefit. This was changed to the current situation of immediate entitlement, as it put essential incoming workers at risk. The Department further notes that, apart from emergencies, access to specialist medical services requires the patient first to be seen by a GP and subsequently referred to a specialist if considered appropriate. In practice, this means that immediate access to specialist services is rare.

Entitlement to free General Practice medical cover under the Supplementary Benefit Law requires the individual to be ordinarily resident in Guernsey or Alderney and to meet the means-tested rules for assistance. The Social Security Department has advised that there may be merit in introducing a qualifying period for Supplementary Benefit. Although this is not considered a priority, the Social Security Department has indicated that this will be examined within the next 12 months.



M.H. Dorey
Health & Social Services Minister

Date of Receipt of the Question: 23rd July 2013

Date of Reply: 7th August 2013