



Primary Care Reimbursement Service
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Mr. Sean Fleming, T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

29th April, 2019

PQ: 16610/19

To ask the Minister for Health the number of medical cards and general practitioner visit cards, respectively that were renewed in 2018; the number of these in which an online review form was requested; if a procedure will be put in place in circumstances in which there is a permanent life medical issue that medical cards can be issued on a much longer term basis which in turn will reduce the administration in the HSE and the pressure, work and upset for persons with conditions such as Down syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Sean Fleming.

Dear Deputy Fleming,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 16610/19), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

291,758 eligibility review application were undertaken in 2018 of which 231,463 application assessments resulted in eligibility being granted.

In 2018, the number of persons that submitted an application for an eligibility review using www.mymedicalcard.ie was 59,135.

Your attention is drawn to the September 2014 Report of the Expert Panel on Medical Need for Medical Card Eligibility. The Expert Panel (Keane) Report sets out 22 Recommendations including:

- The Expert Panel recommends that financial hardship or means testing should remain the main discriminator for selecting the large majority of those eligible for a Medical Card, which is consistent with other health systems in the European Union.
- The Expert Panel recommends that society's desire to exercise a more compassionate and supportive approach for those with a combination of financial and/or medical hardship be addressed by extending the discretionary decision-making process beyond financial hardship to include an assessment of the burden of a medical condition(s).

- The Expert Panel recommends the incorporation of a new Strategic Clinical Advisory Group into the PCRS governance structure, with broad and experienced clinical, lay and administrative representation and access to expert opinions when required. It is the view of the Expert Panel that this is required in order to give clinical oversight and guidance to the operation of a more compassionate and trusted Medical Card system which can strive to ensure that the relatively small percentage of cases requiring the recognition of the burden of a medical condition(s) over and above financial hardship can be accommodated.

Arising from the recommendations in the Expert Panel (Keane) Report, since August 2017, the National Medical Card Unit routinely undertakes assessments of the 'Burden of Illness', having regard to an indication of a serious medical condition affecting an applicant, or other persons, named on the application for eligibility. Such assessments inform the discretionary decision-making recommendation made by a Medical Officer to the Deciding Officer, who in turn is responsible for finalising the eligibility status of all persons named in the application.

It should be noted that the Health (Amendment) Act 2017 provides for the granting of a medical card to all children in respect of whom a Domiciliary Care Allowance is payable. This scheme is effective from 1 June 2017 and enables such children, who are ordinarily resident in Ireland, to be registered for Medical Card eligibility, without a financial means assessment.

Yours sincerely,



Kieran Healy
Primary Care Reimbursement Service