



Maurice Quinlivan, T.D.  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

18<sup>th</sup> December, 2020

PQ: 41519/20

**To ask the Minister for Health if he will consider removing the valid to expiry date on medical cards for citizens aged 70 years or older and allowing these to be held without need for renewal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Maurice Quinlivan**

Dear Deputy Quinlivan,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 41519/20), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Persons granted eligibility under the General Medical Services (GMS) have eligibility for a finite period, as indicated on their individual card. However, any material change in personal circumstances may necessitate a review of eligibility, the outcome of which may result in the rescinding of eligibility in advance of the 'Valid to' date indicated on the card, if the person no longer meets the qualifying criteria of the scheme. In the normal course of business, the National Medical Card Unit (NMCU) instigates a review notification three months before eligibility is due to expire.

A risk assessment informs the eligibility review process. Certain client cohorts, whose circumstances are unlikely to have changed since the grant of eligibility [such as: (i) Over 70s with GP Visit Card eligibility; (ii) persons whose sole income is derived from payments made by Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP)] may have their eligibility extended without the need to engage with the eligibility review process. Others, whose personal circumstances have most likely changed will, as deemed appropriate, be the subject of a full eligibility review, or alternatively a self-assessment eligibility review. All clients are advised on the grant of eligibility that the HSE reserves the right to review and modify their eligibility status, at any time.

Two particular measures introduced in recent years have played a significant part in streamlining the process of eligibility review selection and making it more efficient. Firstly, through information exchange with the DEASP, it is now possible to identify those whose sole income is a social welfare payment, so they don't need to be subjected to an eligibility review. On the other hand, a partial welfare payment may indicate additional income than that outlined in a client's previous application. Secondly, through information exchange with the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, persons granted eligibility based on a means assessment who have recently returned to work may no longer qualify for eligibility under the financial means assessment. These targeted reviews are carried out on a monthly basis.

Apart from meeting the qualifying criteria under the means assessment, eligibility may also be granted on a discretionary basis if there is a likelihood of hardship or undue burden because of medical or social circumstances. The assessment process associated with the granting of eligibility on the basis of hardship or undue burden has also been streamlined on foot of the report of the Expert Panel on Medical Need for Medical Card Eligibility, September 2014, and the introduction of a burden of illness questionnaire recommended by the Clinical Advisory Group (CAG), with the eligibility reviews being carried out by qualified medical officers.

Yours sincerely,



Suzanne Doyle  
Primary Care Eligibility & Reimbursement Service

**The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services Scheme, which includes Medical Cards and GP Visit Cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to the status of Medical Cards and GP Visit Cards applications, which the Deputy / Senator may wish to use for an earlier response. Tel: 01-8647180 / email: [Oireachtas.pcrs@hse.ie](mailto:Oireachtas.pcrs@hse.ie)**